Patsy Carroll in Old New England

Grace Gordon

Eleanor Risley

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PATSY CARROLL IN OLD NEW ENGLAND

"It's under the clock," Rolly explained.

Patsy Carroll
In
Old New England

By
Grace Gordon

Illustrated by
Thelma Gooch

New York
Cupples & Leon Company

PATSY CARROLL SERIES

By GRACE GORDON

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PATSY CARROLL AT WILDERNESS LODGE
PATSY CARROLL UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES
PATSY CARROLL IN THE GOLDEN WEST
PATSY CARROLL IN OLD NEW ENGLAND

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, New York

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INTRODUCTION

The Patsy Carroll Series recounts the adventures of the Wayfarers through North, East, South and West. In volume one, Patsy Carroll at Wilderness Lodge, the four girls, with "Aunt Martha," journey to the Adirondacks, where, in the mountain wilds, they spend an ideal vacation, while, at the same time, they solve the mystery of the lost will. Their actual battle against enemies and against obstacles gives the tale action replete with girls' peculiar humor.

Patsy Carroll Under Southern Skies is the story of the Wayfarers' experience on a southern coast, where they discover a "sprite child" and reclaim her to her place among girls.

A live story of the wonderful "movie world" is recounted in Patsy Carroll in the Golden West. Scenes of interest along the Apache Trail are described, and the "setting" of a great picture, in which the girls find a place, gives a modern tale of exciting details.

The present volume takes Patsy into the historic land of the Pilgrim Fathers, during the celebration of the Tercentenary.

Patsy Carroll
In Old New England

CHAPTER I

THE UNAVOIDABLE THRILLER

"A GENUINE, homemade jaunt, Aunt Martha, correct as to period and finish. Won't you love it? Apple pies, doughnuts, New England clam-bakes, and even the dear little old-time hand-braided rugs. Of course, the rugs are not on the menu, they go with the period effect. Doesn't it all sound soothing?"

"Yes, Patsy dear, I must admit I approach this trip with less apprehension than I have ever experienced in facing any other of your summer adventures. Still"—the dignified face assumed a look of uncertainty—"I have seen you turn a simple, four o'clock tea into a veritable cyclone."

Patsy Carroll laughed her gale of joy. There was no deceiving Aunt Martha. She had learned

many lessons from the Wayfarers, that remarkable little hand-bag club, composed of four girls, with her niece Patricia Carroll as the organizer, prime-mover, genius, and deliverer.

This last was, perhaps, Patsy's most important function, for it always happened that the Wayfarers inadvertantly fell upon, or into, some predicament from which they required to be delivered. Thus memories of these adventures of the previous three summers, in the Adirondacks, in the South, and in the Golden West, justified Aunt Martha's comment on the versatility of Patsy—that she could turn a harmless little afternoon tea into a veritable cyclone. It really had happened.

But New England! Surely that territory was safe from wild dangers at least; there was sure to be some relief, always, where mere humans were concerned—one could usually talk things over with a human being. Aunt Martha was, very probably, reasoning thus while Patsy thought:

"Oh, joy! Old Cape Cod, with whales, maybe, coming to the back door o' mornings for a cold bite! And funny old folks with forefathers' maps drawn right on their historic features; besides, demure Priscillas and the gallant Aldens! I can't decide whether I want a Pilgrim ghost, or a Bos-

tonese high-brow for our mascot." And all this and more—much more—flashed across the prospective mental screen of the irrepressible Patsy.

She whisked things off her dressing table rather violently, and it may not be too critical to admit that some trinkets, usually kept in the left hand drawer, fell helplessly into the right, for Patsy was in a palpitating hurry, and those things amiss would be sure to stay until she returned from a conference with Mabel and Eleanor Perry, otherwise Mab and Nell.

"Bye-bye, Auntie!" she called, fluttering her hand to the little lady who was replacing some flowers on the dining room table. "I have to see the girls and I may stay over for tennis. If Bee should call up, will you just ask her to trot along and come in on the confab?

"We are going to be dear, good children this time, auntie. Aren't you glad we are not bound for Africa, or going up to Mars, or to some such remote region?" But Patsy was out of sight before Aunt Martha had framed an appropriate reply.

Beatrice Forbes, the fourth and final member of the Wayfarers, met her just turning into the long drive that led up to the Perry homestead. Only three days remained now for the summer's

preparation, and it was apparent that all the girls realized there were still some "trifles" to be attended to.

"What a relief," greeted Beatrice, "not to have to gather together so many things 'in case of'! —You know, Pat, my propensity for averting the disaster of needing things," sighed the girl, falling into step with the rapid stride of Patsy.

"Yes, Bee, I do know it. As a rule you load us up to our eyes at the start, then spend the summer trying to dig us out," returned Patsy. "Yes, I believe New England is fairly well civilized as to stores and supplies, seeing 'as how' they started out to experiment down there 'way back in 1620."

Nell and Mab were on the porch, and they hailed the approaching Wayfarers.

"Oh, Pat," called Mabel, "I wonder can we take in Nantucket? I have been reading the weirdest tales about that island!"

"The beauty of this trip is to be its absolute freedom from limitations," announced Patsy, flopping down in a nest of red porch cushions. "And for once Aunt Martha is not scared blue. Not that she hasn't always played fair, and stood by beautifully during every emergency," Patsy hurried to apologize, "but, just naturally, it is a

lot pleasanter to be approaching the source of all America's boasted civilization, than to be planning for wilds. You girls, of course, have heard" —with an explanatory smirk—"that the Forefathers did, actually, come in by way of old Plymouth——"

"Yes, we have—heard——" mocked Beatrice. "We have even gone swimming in the same water that once washed the famous rock."

"How unsanitary!" continued Patsy. "But I say, girls, joking aside, the introduction, or preamble, or preface of this summer's jaunt, is so ominously tranquil that I fear a complete reversal of conditions before we are well under sail, so to speak. Never knew it to fail," she predicted. "Calm before the storm, and all that sort of thing. At any rate, let's rejoice in the calm start. It counts for considerable in getting off propitiously."

"We are practically all packed up, except hats and soft waists," remarked Nell. "Mab always wants to leave them until the very last minute, with the result, often, of leaving them altogether," she finished a little critically.

"Now, sis, you know I only left your leghorn hat out last time because the brim would have to bend——"

"I really never missed it, Mab, and was glad not to have to bother with it," conciliated Nell. "But I would like to get a few waists in 'in case of,' as Bee puts it."

"And Aunt Martha has an entire steamer trunk packed with 'in case ofs,' " added Patsy. "I keep telling her we are sure to find a chain of stores at the corner, but she insists we might leave civilization for Maine woods or Cape Cod oddities. Really, New England does look a bit extensive, when one consults the booklets," and with a motion she indicated a rapid consultation of quite a small library of booklets.

"I had hoped we might make this a self-supporting summer," put in Beatrice, who had ambitions toward the science of sociology. "There are so many opportunities now."

"Yes, and we would all feel so much better satisfied to demonstrate our personal ability in self support," agreed Patsy promptly. "The Child Welfare Special would be ideal as an agent for our enterprise. You know that is a motorized station that goes into rural districts, to give mothers instruction along the regular Child Welfare lines."

"But one would have to know nursing," interrupted Eleanor.

"No, the work is educational, not clinical," explained Patsy, "and you know we have all had training in that line in this year at Lynwood. I wouldn't be afraid to go motoring down along the old colonies, to bring to the conservative little mothers there the modern message of proper child raising," said Patsy, snatching off her Panama sailor, and giving her sleeve a premonitory upward hitch, as if in preparation for the work under discussion. "But the trouble is, we never could get dad and Aunt Martha to consent," she continued. "They would suspect child welfare measles, child welfare chickenpox and all the other possible juvenile attainments. No, girls, I have gone all over all that, and am convinced we will be obliged to rumble off in the ten-two Boston Express, all parlor cars. Wherever we go later, we will be forced to leave New York City after the manner made famous by the so called 'idle rich,' " she decided.

"Our folks would simply keep us home if they even suspected we might go in for that sort of work," spoke Mabel. "Mother is simply terrified at anything that looks like slumming."

"This isn't anything like slumming, Mab," Patsy hurried to explain. "The Child Welfare Special is a wonderfully equipped office on

wheels. It has all the contrivances for demonstrating child work; a tent, blankets, cots, household utensils and even wiring apparatus," finished Patsy.

"Where did you get all your information, Pat?" asked Beatrice. "I thought I was the only one of the group that went in for that sort of thing."

"Indeed not! I have been delving in field work all spring, and our leader complimented me, more than once, on my—sunny way!" She discounted the recalled compliment with a set of foolish antics. They would mean nothing in words, but were most effective in reality.

"I would love to have a turn in that demonstration car," declared Eleanor, "and I quite agree that adventuring in luxury is rather stupid, compared with the possiblities Pat enumerates. But, as Mab says, the folks wouldn't hear of it, if they knew in advance."

"You have voiced the solution of the problem," said Patsy facetiously. "That little word 'advance' is the real difficulty, and they must not know until thereafter. So just bide your time, girls, and prepare to take the ten-two. I hereby bespeak for the end chair, or sofa. I love to sit up front and play school with the whole coach."

"Yes, and spot possible mysteries in the way of elopements, or kidnapping tragedies, I suppose," teased Beatrice. "I am just wondering, Pat, what thriller you will lead us into this season? Last summer we thought the Golden West about the zenith of our points of interest, but now, dear, little, old New England seems fairly to whistle witch—calls out to us, even at this distance. I am just positive we will all come back fit to be interviewers in the New England branch of the reference library—if for nothing worse."

"What's the itinerary?" asked Eleanor.

"First stop at Bridgeport," answered Patsy, "but we won't get out there. Then just along to New London. I think we might like a little boating there. Good place to show off all your pretty white serges, girls. I always think of New London as a place where the original Willie left the yacht—'Willie off the yacht,' you remember. But I believe the place has become quite commercialized since the war. It has a big government pier, and no private boats may go in there. Don't you remember the famous, sneaking German submarine that tried out the American course by coming in here that way?"

"I try to forget," admitted Eleanor. "And I don't believe I would feel safe on any such

waters, even now. I hate to think of the word 'submarine.'"

"Oh, I do remember," echoed Mabel. "But it seems to me the waters there are always white with sail boats. At any rate, let us arrange to stop off—for a day. What do you think, Pat?" She held her pencil poised ready to insert the stop-over clause in her little, red-leather note book.

"It is so close to New York," demurred Patsy, "and—well, we'll see."

"Possibly so tame," assisted Beatrice. "But even at a place like New London, Pat, you could rescue a drowning youth with a famous family pedigree in his white flannel pocket; or, you could even try your Child Welfare out in the clam diggings. Let us leave the details of stop-overs to the impulse of the moment," counselled the student Beatrice. "Then we won't have to be continually apologizing to ourselves for breaking schedules."

"Lovely idea," drawled Patsy. "Self expression finds its true outlet in absolute freedom! There, that's all original and a yard wide. I made it up just like that! Doesn't it sound pretty?"

"If you don't analyze it, it does," answered

Mabel, "but as a proverb it is dreadfully shy on the prov. Pat, you're a fraud! I know perfectly well, you have some thrilling scheme of real adventure up that rather soiled sleeve. Yes, I know you played tennis in it yesterday, so don't apologize. All I ask is that you let us know within a hair's breadth of the hairbreath escape. I'd be thankful for that," concluded blue-eyed little Mabel, giving her porch swing "more gas."

"What makes you all think something thrilling is bound to happen?" asked Patsy—chuckles supplying her own particular answer.

"Because it always does," said Nell simply.

"And because four girls on adventure bent tempt the fates," suggested Beatrice.

"Much more 'because' we know our Patsy Carroll," offered Mabel. "But I notice, Pat dear, no one is threatening to drop out on that account. Rather, are we all very keen at the prospect."

"Very well," replied Patsy. "I'll do my best to live up to—or down—to the reputation. But what can you expect of New England?"

"Heaps," finished Eleanor, and no one offered contradiction for the prediction.

CHAPTER II

WAYFARERS TRUE TO TYPE

IT was a tidy little party, indeed, that threaded its way through the animated carpet of humans which stretched out on the great floor of the New York station.

But, even at nine-fifty-five, the people who were coming in and going out kept the stream moving in each direction, and when Patsy and her three chums, with Aunt Martha as the guest of honor, glided in through the gates toward the Boston express, there was an air of expectancy noticeable in the very way the porter "toted" the bags, and the manner in which the ticket-taker punched the tickets and, surely, in the way the train porter handed them all aboard.

Again this was all in the view point, and unquestionably entirely hidden from each and every railroad hand, while flagrantly obvious to everyone of the Wayfarers. Even Aunt Martha clung

tightly to her beaded hand-bag, and asked Patsy, more than once, if the Pullman tickets were surely in her own blue, morocco pocket-book.

Just stepping aboard, Patsy, who trailed along last, was conscious of an unusual stir at the steps. Turning, she faced squarely a young man with a still younger girl in his arms. A glance showed that the girl was helpless, unable to walk, and a second hurried look outlined her very strong resemblance to the young man who carried her—her brother, of course.

Patsy stepped inside the vestibule quickly, to make room for the invalid's entry, and with a sweep of her arm directed her own party to clear the aisle, while the young man, followed by a nurse or attendant, passed along.

Instantly the eyes of all three Wayfarers focussed on Patsy, and they said in a glance, as clearly as if in words:

"There's your mystery!"

But Patsy was sublimely indifferent and merely produced the chair tickets, then swung into the tower of upholstery, quite as if the handsome boy were not, at that exact moment, gently placing his helpless charge in a chair almost opposite.

Mabel and Beatrice were not quite so indifferent, however, and while Patsy and Eleanor

adjusted the small hand-luggage, the other two cast furtive glances at the very beautiful girl in the chair across the way. The boy, finally satisfied that the girl was comfortable, dropped into his own chair and sighed with audible content.

"All right, sis?" he asked in a boy's free, unhampered way. "Like it?"

"Love it, Torry, and you're a darling! I never could have ventured without you," replied the girl, in a tone but a little lower than the boy's, and easily heard across the aisle.

"Wouldn't have let you," he finished, opening up a magazine, and laying it in the blue, silken lap opposite him.

"I just want to look," sighed the girl, and her "look" swept over the Wayfarers. "It's so wonderful to be actually—traveling!"

"You bet!" exclaimed Torry. "Well, look just as long as you like. After a while there will be more to look at."

Eleanor chuckled, she didn't giggle; it was more grown up than that; and Torry, for the first time, glanced over at what he had so ungallantly "turned down," as not being the best there was to look at. He smiled into his paper, and turned uneasily until his chair swung full-face to the window.

Rather uncomfortable, Beatrice and Mabel also swung their chairs about, and when Patsy asked where was the collapsible cup for Aunt Martha, Beatrice stammered and flushed, until Patsy laughed outright.

"Hush, do, Pat," begged Mabel. "I feel too foolish for words. And the sweet sister may think—we're trying to flirt!"

This banality checked the flow of laughter from Patsy. She loved a joke, but not at such a price.

"Let me take your veil off, Auntie?" she asked Aunt Martha directly. "It is so warm in here, under the earth, but presently we'll be dug out into the living world again," and she unpinned the bit of suggested material that scarcely left a definite thread on the small embroidered toque to which it clung.

The incident closed that way. Passengers all around fell to their own particular traveling diversions, and the big express crawled out of New York into the less-mechanically constructed world touching on the border lines of Connecticut.

Not much in the way of real scenery greeted the indifferent glances raised, now and then, to the window's illusion of stationary train and swirling landscape; but New York was falling

behind in the race, and, according to Patsy, that was the main idea.

The inevitable bride and groom shed rice and self consciousness along the aisle, as they passed out to the vestibule, ostensibly for stronger air. But the Wayfarers knew better, and even Patsy, mentor of decorum, did not hesitate to glance after the pretty little bride, who, in the vestibule, proceeded to shake things violently, hopeful of shedding all the rice at one spill.

"The bridal trail from Brooklyn," whispered Patsy to Aunt Martha. "Why do people consider it a criminal offence to get married?"

"Child!" charged the shocked little woman, "rice and confetti are merely marks of—of——"

"Revenge or jealousy!" asserted Patsy. "And it may be fun, but it's a very heathenish sort. That child's honeymoon is being spoiled because of it."

"Wrong, Pat," challenged Mabel, "the rice simply furnished an excuse for distraction. Brides love it, I've heard them say so."

"It may be," assented Patsy, running her slender fingers through her bronze hair that seemed to resent the heat, "but don't hold it against me. Make mine rose leaves, girls, please do! Now, a shower of rose leaves has a point in meaning,

anl I love to toss them down from the organ loft myself, but rice! Ugh! Tantalizing and meaningless! Here we are at Bridgeport! Same old bridge and tressels I remember since childhood, Auntie. See the huge sign board that you always read out in separate letters to me! And it is the same brand of medicine advertised!"

"I don't feel like taking any lunch," replied Aunt Martha, without apology for the digression, "but, if you girls care to eat, I'll go into the dining car and——"

"Watch us eat?" teased Eleanor. "Auntie, dear, I vote with you in the negative. Traveling on a close day kills my appetite."

"Come in and have cream and coffee, or tea, or even lemonade," suggested Patsy. "We won't get to Boston for hours, and then it will be past lunch time."

This plan was finally agreed upon, and as the Wayfarers passed into the dining car they encountered a porter with the small table sometimes set up at the parlor coach window ledge, for the special convenience of a particular traveler.

"Torry is going to fix up dinner for Sis," said Eleanor. "How queer we should meet a Torry this summer, and a Terry, last."

"Meet him!" chorused the others, while Nell attempted to smile off the inference.

"But just the same, Nell, I am sure we presently shall meet pretty, helpless Sis, brother or no brother, I simply must speak to that lovely invalid. It seems unsociable not to."

"Oh, you wouldn't, Pat!" exclaimed Bee.

"But why not?" parried Patsy. "Just because a girl has a brother does not ostracize her from our own ken. She may want to know something——"

"Your name, for instance?"

"Or what you do to make your hair curl?"

"Or, how you come by one dimple, instead of two," a suggestion from each of Patsy's three companions.

"Very well. Be as rude as you like, but I shall speak to Sis. Aunt Martha, do have tea. It will prepare you for our New England tournament," and Patsy ordered tea for Aunt Martha, with "variations" for the girls.

Just then a very broad smile suffused the face of every single Wayfarer, for at that moment, the young man labeled Torry stood at Aunt Martha's elbow!

"I beg your pardon, madam," he spoke through a smile of his own, "but I saw you leave this in

your chair, and I thought—perhaps I had better hand it to you, myself."

It was her very best hand-bag, and contained so many valuable, or invaluable, things!

"Thank you very much," breathed Aunt Martha, showing relieved fear at the disaster averted. "It was kind of you to bring it to me."

"Yes, thank you indeed," spoke Patsy bravely. "That *would* have been a loss," and her smile was even more definite than the others of that series.

Accepting the expression of gratitude with easy grace, the youth sauntered off, and, as his gray coat tail brushed out of the vestibule door, the girls allowed their choking struggles some leeway.

"There!" said Patsy triumphantly. "Wasn't that easy?"

"Pat Carroll! Did you stick that bag in the arm of the chair *purposely?"* asked Bee, aside. Aunt Martha was too busy with her tea to heed all their girlish prattle.

"Of course I did—not! Fate played right into my hands, as she always does," with a grimace of apology for the egotism. "Now I can go straight in, and ask Sis how she enjoyed her luncheon."

Aunt Martha looked up suddenly. "Girls,"

she spoke, "I think it was a most considerate thing for that young man to fetch me my bag himself. Had he passed it on to the porter there is no telling what might have become of it, and I have so many valuables in it. Patsy, I think I shall speak to the young lady invalid, and perhaps you girls may like to make her acquaintance. Her life is so limited, poor child."

This was one of the occasions when Aunt Martha's wisdom directly supported the girls' nonsense, and a volley of intelligent glances was promptly shot out in a grateful acknowledgement.

"I mean to speak to her directly, Auntie," replied Patsy honestly. "I never saw brother and sister devotion more marked than that which these two evince. The porter might have carried her in, of course, but her brother would not allow it. That's the sort of brother to have; isn't it, girls?"

And no one, just then, felt like spoiling that sentiment even with the frivolity of a smile.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING BETH AND TORRY

"IT was all Torry's idea," the invalid was saying to her audience of Wayfarers. "He insisted on giving up his entire vacation to me. We are going to visit the old family homestead, out in Massachusetts." She had just introduced herself as Beth Brandon, and her brother Torry.

"Have you been ill long?" asked Aunt Martha with considerate hesitation.

"Two years," replied the other bravely. "It is just my knees, and we are hopeful they will grow stronger. I am perfectly well, otherwise."

The glow in her cheeks attested to the truth of her claim, and Patsy further supported the recovery hope by recalling a complete case of Molly Shepperd, whose "knees were disabled for three whole years, but finally became as strong as ever."

Torry was out in another coach during these introductory formalities, and just now came swinging down the aisle with something under his coat.

"Oh, he is bringing Zippy!" exclaimed the girl happily. "He has been all alone in the luggage car, with only my chair for company."

Zippy, a very lively young terrier, was struggling against the cage made by Torry's two vigorous arms, and was only held back by that and the coat screen combined. The dog whined and fretted to reach his young mistress, and the girls swung their chairs around to make way for his coming.

Presently little Zippy smothered the invalid with "kisses," while her brother accepted the introduction to the girls, which she was almost vainly attempting to give over the terrier's frisky head.

"He can't stay long, Beth," cautioned the boy. "I had to bamboozle every porter from here to the baggage car. But he made such a fuss when he saw me. Your chair is rather a poor personal substitute, sis, when it comes to a long journey for Zip."

"There, there!" Beth was quieting the excited little animal. "We will soon be in Boston, then

they won't make you travel as baggage any more, Zippy." This tone of voice seemed to mean "quiet" to the terrier, and he immediately made himself comfortable and pretty on the arm of the invalid's chair.

"It seems a shame to coop him up," commented Patsy, making friends by a reassuring stroke of the little black-tipped head. "He is so well-behaved."

"And reliable," added the youth. "I would trust my sister with Zip rather than with a much more pretentious creature."

"Yes, when Selma, my maid, leaves me, Zip is put in charge. In fact, he very often usurps her place," said the girl, with a friendly smile for the mute maid who was tatting fine lace in the next chair.

Passengers all about them seemed entirely agreeable to Zippy's presence in their parlor car, but the brother and sister had no idea of imposing upon their generosity, so poor, little, outcast Zip was soon picked up from his perfectly inoffensive snooze on the velour chair arm.

"Come, boy," coaxed Torry, as the girls offered affectionate little farewell pats to the helpless terrier. "Give him a biscuit, sis, and that may compensate some."

Selma, the maid, took a biscuit from the small leather bag, but Zippy sniffed it indifferently.

"Go along, boy," coaxed Beth; and even at the three little words, her dog picked up his ears intelligently. "Be good," her voice changed again. "And we'll soon be home." At the word "home" Zippy wanted to jump, but Torry held him securely, meanwhile making his way back to the baggage car.

Ordinarily a dog in a train coach simply means some over-fussy owner, who resorts to the bag-and-draw-string trick of keeping a pet poodle with her against the rules; but this was different, and even the remotest spectator, a cynical looking chap, in a distant chair, who stuck his feet out recklessly, smiled as Zippy passed him.

"The little dog was sent to me from grandfather's home, after he passed away last year," explained the invalid. "Gran'dad trained him to be a one-man dog, as they express it, and was sure he would be great company for me. He was right. Zippy is as intelligent as many a child might be, and gran'dad was a wonderful teacher, for terriers are usually very self-willed." The dark eyes flickered to ward off a threatening haze that just hinted sadness, and Eleanor quickly

came to the rescue with: "Have you ever visited the homestead before, Miss Brandon?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! We always had Thanksgiving there until—mother went. That was five years ago. Torry is at college now, and I study at home. We are practically alone, for even our guardian is abroad."

A shifting of luggage and general stirring of passengers gave warning of Boston's nearness, and the Wayfarers hurriedly expressed hopes of renewing acquaintance with Miss Brandon during the summer. Aunt Martha was making doubly sure of the precious beaded bag, while Bee and Mab secured the small satchels from overhead racks, not waiting for the porter's attention. (Whisking of coats is ever more profitable to porters than reaching for parasols.) When Torry returned he delayed his own preparations to talk with Aunt Martha.

Patsy, who had taken a strong liking to Beth, lingered with her while the others fluttered about.

"You know," confided the invalid. "Brother would not be satisfied with the reports we have been getting from the homestead, and that is one reason why we are going down to see things for ourselves. The farm is rented to a very honorable man, who is perfectly satisfied with the

acreage; but the house!" She smiled a queer, cynical smile. "There are such stories rumored about it that no one can stay there in peace. Of course it is all rank nonsense, and we know it, but some of our relatives," again the reserving expression, "opposed grandfather's will, so, naturally, they are not helping to straighten things out."

"No telling but we may apply for the place as a camp, if we get through our sight-seeing in time to settle down," proposed Patsy, impulsively exchanging cards and addresses with Miss Brandon. "But everyone insists on seeing Plymouth first—when in doubt, go to Plymouth, you know."

"That is one of the spots I count on visiting," said Beth a little wistfully. "But I shall not allow brother to stick by me every moment of his precious vacation. He needs swimming, boating and hiking, and a lot of other forms of amusements; and wouldn't it be lovely if you really did camp at our old place?"

The approach of "brother" ended his laudation, and a general exodus followed. It seemed more considerate for the Wayfarers to leave Beth in her seat, and not remain to see her carried out by the valiant Torry. The leave-taking was sincere to a point nearly affectionate, and included a

parting promise to visit the homestead, if possible. Finally, the newly-made friends separated.

"I have always wondered why persons in any way helpless appear so whimsically attractive," Patsy remarked, passing out in the line slowly detraining.

"Because, my dear, they have that quiet and poise sure to follow prolonged concentration," explained Aunt Martha. "While we continue to flutter about, we must expect to appear—fluttery," which was rather a departure in correct speech for Miss Martha.

Vacation throngs populated the Boston terminal thoroughfare now, as the Wayfarers blended into their makeup on the early summer afternoon, and they experienced their first realization of touring through New England.

"It seems to me," Bee remarked critically, "people here are distinctly different from those situated twice as far west from New York. Even the mannerisms, aside from their accent, seems so very——"

"Not provincial," warned Patsy. "Don't utter anything so limited in Boston, Bee. But I agree with you, the people have a quality of their own. Just hear that girl singing to that tall one! The music is the regular tone for every

day occasions, compared with which our own dialogues slump into monotonous monotones. Let me take your arm, Aunt Martha. A long car ride does things to one's muscles."

"Rather a relief not to have to bother about our own motor, dear," remarked the faithful little aunt. "I don't mind stiff joints from train travel, but the effects of motoring over rough roads is decidedly more unpleasant."

Mab and Nell were engaging the taxi for their hotel, and, in spite of some delays, it really did appear simpler to jog along in a taxi, without further responsibility than paying the fare. Congested traffic seemed no lure for motoring.

"I wonder will we run across our friends of the chair car?" soliloquized Mab. "A pretty and helpless girl seems a regular magnet for personal attraction."

"I intend to make *sure* of running across them," returned Patsy. "If we can cover our sight-seeing in reasonable time, perhaps we'll hire the old homestead as our resting quarters."

"But the young lady said there was something peculiar about the old place; didn't she?" queried Aunt Martha.

"No, not about the *place,*" returned Patsy, "just about the *folks* opposing her grandfather's

will. She couldn't tell me more on such slight acquaintance, but I suppose it is the usual thing —making a house untenantable, for spite."

"And I rather think a boy like Torry would be able to straighten out the little matter," commented Mabel. "The way he held Zip in check indicated some strength of character," she ventured. "That dog simply worships the girl."

"Zippy is only a fox terrier," reasoned Patsy. "The other trouble may be 'human ghosts,' and you all know they are the most virulent type of pesky critters. Here we are. Mab, your vanity case is wide open and displays your looking glass. As if a Wayfarer cared for looks when out adventuring!"

But Patsy's own appearance belied the parenthesis, for she looked fresh and pretty as ever, in her simple blue voile with the soft white mull ruffle at neck and elbows; while her companions were equally presentable. Bee wore practical linen, Mabel was in her ever reliable Belgium blue, and Eleanor appeared quite as serviceable in a shaded green duck with fine white pipings.

The day's journey had done little to spoil the appearance of the four happy young Wayfarers, with dainty Aunt Martha in her dark

blue taffeta, and, as they emerged in the first lap of the jaunt through old New England, even the other hurrying vacationists made opportunity to glance approval at the little party.

"Girls," said Aunt Martha, settling down finally in her own room at the stop-over hotel, "I had a word aside with that very nice young man——"

"Oh, you did!" gleefully cried out Patsy, shamelessly mocking her prim little auntie. "And when was this little word aside perpetrated?"

"Now, Patsy dear, don't be so boisterous, and just see! You have swept away my cards!" (Patsy swept them back quite as promptly.) "Thank you, child; now please listen to me. Those children are undertaking a very serious piece of business alone, and I scarcely understand why other relatives have allowed them to go on without more experienced help."

"What, Auntie, do you mean about the old homestead affair? The young man seems easily able to manage a piece of business of that character," Patsy remarked.

"That is only one phase of their undertaking. The boy spoke to me because he admitted his fears for his sister's comfort in her traveling

venture since her disablement," explained Aunt Martha.

The girls, who had been fluttering about in the initial hours, making themselves at home in the Boston hotel, now settled down promptly to hear this version of the Brandon's summer venture, as Aunt Martha announced:

"The real purpose of their trip is to put the young lady under the care of a Boston specialist."

"Well?" questioned Beatrice, puzzled at the serious tone in recounting this simple matter.

"To do this, the young man said, he felt obliged to make a very determined effort to sell the grandfather's estate," went on the little lady. "His sister, he declared, knows nothing of their financial obligations, but he had such faith in this particular doctor, he would not delay the treatment until such times as the property might be sold without opposition. It is a strange thing how a little money may bring real bitterness into families!" she sighed rather wearily in conclusion.

"But what is the trouble?" demanded the practical Patsy. "Don't the other heirs want to sell now?"

"I could not understand the details, but I gathered that this young lady was her grandfather's

favorite, and, perhaps on account of her disablement, he especially provided for her. The Brandon's are orphans, the boy told me, but I rather think that young man quite capable of assuming the head of his family as far as business is concerned. However, as regards his sister's health, and very probably, operations, well—" and she stopped and shifted uneasily—"all I can say is a young man needs someone with motherly experience to look after his sister under such critical conditions."

"Even ordinary girls, under most ordinary conditions, cannot get along without," said Patsy, pressing an affectionate cheek against the brow of her own sympathetic, yet wise little aunt. "What would I do without you?"

The only real mother this splendid girl ever knew, did her credit at the moment, for Robert Carroll, father of Patsy, had entrusted to this sister the entire care of his girl, left motherless at an early age.

"Pat, I see our mystery clearly now," said Mabel, who was already out of her traveling clothes, refreshed and redressed in a cool afternoon frock. "I can imagine Torry going after the disturbances that make the old homestead untenantable and unsalable. Nothing so common-

place as ghosts, of course, but, whatever the trouble is, Torry is the very boy to go at it. I fear me the old homestead will be sold before we ever have a chance to look it over."

"But the first work to be done is the girl's hospital treatment," Aunt Martha gave out. It was quite remarkable that she had acquired so much information in that "word aside with the boy."

"Oh, where did I leave my timetable folder?" suddenly asked Patsy. "I put Beth's card in it. Can I have lost it?" She was shuffling through all her papers, in her bag and her card-case. "I am sure I put it in the folder."

"But even if you have lost it, we all know the name Brandon," said Nell. "Why take so much trouble hunting, Pat?"

"Because I never even glanced at the card, and we don't know where the old homestead is situated. Beth wrote it all on the back of the card, and I did not bother further. Did anyone happen to hear the place mentioned?"

No one had heard it, each admitted.

"Nell, the card is gone," decided Patsy rather dolefully. "But perhaps they will write us. I gave this hotel as our first two weeks' forwarding address."

"I am sure Beth will write," reasoned Nell.

"Beth may not be able to, for a while," added Aunt Martha. "But, girls, as soon as you are ready we will go down for dinner. I believe I can eat something now."

"Just a minute, Auntie, I must work up a smile," said Patsy.

"Do, dear," urged Mab; "forget the lost card."

"We may find something more interesting below," laughed Nell.

"Lead me to it," sighed Patsy.

CHAPTER IV

A FLIVER AND IT'S WAYS

BUT Beth and her brother Torry were less fortunate than the Wayfarers in their traveling connections, made after the Boston Express rumbled into the Old Colony station.

Gently and with unhidden affection, the boy lifted his sister from the train and placed her into the waiting wheel-chair. The maid, Selma, attended to all hand-luggage, and then took up her post at the side of the chair until young Mr. Brandon should come back from the baggage car with frisky little Zippy. The crowds had dwindled down to the few careful folk, who ever shun the rush for more secure footway; and Beth was wide-eyed with pleasurable anticipation for her holiday in New England, after the monotony of her close confinement since the sturdy limbs refused to support the former welcome burden,

imposed by pretty, vivacious Beth Brandon. She did not sigh, although those looking at her patient face, no doubt, turned away filled with solemn sympathy, for, to the girl in the chair, a big adventure was beckoning, and Torrington Brandon could be depended upon for its success in fulfillment.

"Is he coming, Selma?" she asked, after a prolonged wait, and no sign of the brother's return.

"I do not see him, Miss Beth," replied the maid, herself showing some anxiety. "But I guess he will come soon; yes, very soon."

The very last passenger had shuffled by, and the trainmen were pushing the little carts loaded high with trunks and satchels, when the smile on the invalid's face kindled into a glow, and Torry was seen approaching.

"He is coming!" she exclaimed. "I was just beginning to worry."

"But he has no Zippy," said the maid, in mild surprise that their dog should not be with the young man hurrying along the platform.

"Oh, Torry, where is Zip?" demanded the invalid anxiously.

"I just came back to get you, Beth," he explained. "Zip raced off, and I realized he had

seen someone he knew. Can you imagine who it was, Beth?"

"In Boston? Of course I cannot! Who?"

"Bell and Mildred," he answered. "I was so surprised——"

But Beth's face fell. The news did not convey pleasure, neither did her brother attempt to hide his own irritation.

"Yes," he continued, pushing the chair along rather quickly. "I felt Zip pull, and before I knew what he was after, he had whisked right up to the two belligerent cousins. They patted him until they saw me looming up in the rear, then they seemed to grow taller," he finished quizzically.

"Didn't they speak to you; and where is Zip?" asked Beth.

"Oh, yes, they spoke to me, but I wouldn't want to have depended upon their brief words for a welcome in Boston. And Zip is having a nice time now, in the far end of the restaurant, eating a real pretty dish of beef stew. Poor little Zip was very hungry."

"Are they—the girls, gone?" faltered his sister.

"I hope so. They almost choked with surprise when they saw me, and I didn't risk the news that

you also were in town, for Millie seemed threatened with something dreadful at *my* single presence. But I'm glad I met them," he said more decisively. "Their attitude gives me a clue to work upon."

"And Zip knew them?"

"Sure thing! But he has some intuition, at that, for a couple of frisks and he was back to me, a very-much-disappointed doggie. He really acted as if he resented their slighting his royal master."

They had reached the end of the long platform, and the young man stopped to make some inquiries.

"If you are not too tired, Sis," he proposed, "we will just walk along to the hotel. I feel like bracing a little—stiff from the ride," he declared adroitly. "Selma, if you want to take a taxi——"

"Oh, no, indeed," interposed the maid. "I can just put this bag in the chair at front—there. Then a very little hand-one——"

"All right, we'll make a hike out of our initial number," said the boy. "Here is where I reclaim the ravenous Zip. I won't be but a few minutes this time."

And he was back with the frisky little animal

in just about the time specified. Up to the side of the wheel chair sprang Zip, and cuddling in with familiar confidence, he scarcely deigned to gaze out at historic old Boston, as they trundled along.

Approaching one of the angles peculiar to the streets of the Hub, our friends noticed among the autos one, a small, undeniably new affair, that seemed unable to keep in line. Without comment both Beth and Torry watched the machine in its zigzag course, and, before either realized their actual danger, the small car shot suddenly out from the thoroughfare and jerked against the curb.

"Oh, Torry!" exclaimed Beth as her brother quickly swung her chair under the protection of an arch. "That will surely——"

The crash came before Beth finished her sentence, for, no sooner had the car touched the curb, than it made a second bound over the sidewalk and up to the window of a tea shop!

"Take the chair, Selma," ordered Torry hurriedly, as he rushed to the side of the obstreperous motor.

Fortunately the first impact against the curb seemed to give the driver a chance to apply some control, for the second spurt was much

less in velocity, and almost harmless in the final smash.

Torry was first to reach the side of the terrified driver, who happened to be a little lady, all alone with her alarming experience.

"You're all right, no damage at all," Torry quickly assured her, rather gleefully, and the simple words had a magical effect, for, as he spoke, the woman jumped up and sprang out of the car, ready, it appeared, to hug the innocent Torry.

"No damage? No one killed? No big window broken?" she gasped, holding convulsively to Torry's arm, while the crowd, that seems ever to emerge from the very atmosphere of excitement, looked on with its usual quizzical eyes.

"Not a thing wrong, beyond your bent fender," he added. "But let me take you inside the tea room while——"

"Torrington Brandon! You wonderful boy!" she gasped, this time actually perpetrating the hug. "However did you happen here? Don't you know me?"

"Can't just recall—" faltered the surprised Torry, "but better come inside. The police officer will want to talk to you——"

"You keep by me," implored the greatly ex-

cited woman. "I am not sure I'll be able to answer all their questions, and——"

"I have left my sister a short distance away, with her maid, and I'll have to return to her presently," interrupted Torry. "The demands on him were multiplying rather alarmingly, he realized.

"Run get her and come right back to me!" entreated the woman, who had allowed herself to be led into the Delft Tea Room. "I learned to drive that car for exercise, but I didn't count on—on this!" she panted.

"Don't worry," soothed Torry. "Your car is back where it belongs, and you were very fortunate to escape injuring yourself and others."

"Don't I know it? Might have been killed—land sakes! And they told me little cars were as safe as buckboards! Seems to me they are buckboards of another class," she sighed.

The police officer was standing politely, waiting for her to calm down, but he now tapped his pencil impatiently. Outside the window the curious crowd was dwindling away while those inside stood by gasping, panting, exclaiming and otherwise indulging in startled astonishment. Torry was edging to the door.

"Your relative?" the officer asked him.

"No, I just happened along," explained Torry.

"He's no relative, but an old friend," explained the little woman, adjusting her bonnet and then her eyeglasses. "His folks and mine were neighbors for years, and his grandfather——"

Torry slipped out. He was anxious about Beth, and could not delay away from her longer. He found her smiling happily, assured that the runaway car had done no damage.

"But the little lady driving the machine is some old friend of ours," he explained, hastily taking the chair from Selma. "I must go back to see her out of her predicament. I couldn't wait to hear the particulars, but she knew us all, and mentioned gran'dad."

"Really!" exclaimed Beth. "Isn't that splendid; to meet a friend, first thing!"

Her brother did not spoil the illusion with any mention of the two cousins he had met, "first thing," who seemed anything but friendly. Instead he said: "The place seems a nice little lunch room, and if the excitement is over, suppose we all take a cup of tea to be sociable with the lady?"

"Lovely! I would enjoy something," admitted Beth, "and if we find just what we want I won't have to go to the hotel dining room just this once.

Although," she hurried to declare—"I am not going to have meals sent up, you know, brother. I am going to table every single time after this first day."

"Of course you are! That's half the fun! But I'll just step inside, and make sure it's worth while your coming in before I disturb you," proposed the devoted boy. "See, everyone is gone. There's the car, and I see its driver within."

Fortunately these breaks, or delays, were not so irksome to the visitors as they appear in the telling. To take a helpless young lady through a city is always a difficult task, unless the caretakers are willing to put her into the hands of strangers. Then the wheel chair is shipped from one stop to the next by a baggage expressman, while the invalid is carried about in taxi or bus. This method really affords expediency, but it also entails that hardship of emphasizing the invalid's helplessness, and Torry Brandon was determined to avoid as much of that unhappy reality as a brave young heart, and a healthy young physique, could overcome. He would walk beside Beth or carry her. This was to be the practical slogan of their venturesome vacation.

"Fine!" he exclaimed, returning. "Just the place. Come along," and, assigning Zippy and

the wheel chair to Selma, he picked the invalid up in his arms and quite gracefully carried her into the tea room. Beth knew how to rest in those willing arms, and her own hand just twined over his shoulder, as she seemed to sit lightly on the human chair, without a sign of awkwardness or of discomfort, made her a pretty, if pathetic, picture.

"There you are," Torry announced, and Beth now looked about her from the cretonne easy chair pulled up in front of an attractive fireplace.

The driver of the frisky car was standing by, still rather breathless. It was apparent she had not expected to see this girl helpless, but, in the twinkling of an eye, she recovered her self-possession and was greeting Beth warmly.

"You darling girl!" she exclaimed. "And how sweet you look!" Her embrace was no mockery, she had clasped Beth in her arms. "There," standing off, "you have grown just like your mother. Same brown eyes, and that glossy hair——"

"You are Miss Abbie, aren't you?" asked Beth with a warm smile.

"Yes, and your big brother didn't know me. Abbie Truesdell, that's just who I am. Young lady," to one in the gray Priscilla, "fetch tea and

toast. Will you have toast, child? And to think I should not have met you two children in this big strange city if that little pony cart hadn't reared! Compensation in everything; isn't there?" she asked, regardless of sequence, or the lack of it.

"Don't you remember Miss Abbie, Torry?" asked Beth. "You always wanted to pick her apples before they were ripe."

"Oh, yes, indeed I do," responded Torry. "I also remember the fine time we had at your lawn party—the one she gave for our Sunday School class, and someone, it was not I, stole the balloons and set them off prematurely."

"Yes, and one went right in old Poky Oldham's window, and he grunted worse than ever about it," recalled Miss Abbie. "I'll forgive you, young man, for forgetting me now, for—this—this is a regular up to date Boston Tea Party." The last sentence was complimentary to a daintily set table which Priscilla had just finished preparing for the visitors.

It was over the tea cups that Miss Abbie chatted her interesting bits of news.

"No, I haven't been out to the old place since last spring," she answered Beth. "But I saw then how things were going."

"But what do you suppose has set folks against the place?" queried Torry, with keen interest in the report of his grandfather's property.

"Simply no telling," replied Miss Abbie. "I would have suspected those two cousins, Millie and Bell, but it seems they are working here in Boston, so it can't be any trick of theirs," she argued.

"But what happens? What are people so afraid of out there?" pressed Beth.

"You know how things go in the country," reasoned the little lady. "I suppose there isn't a mite of truth in any one, single rumor, but I often think the witch-craft days have left their influence in some parts of our state. And you know, or you must have heard, it was in that territory that a lot of wicked persecution took place."

"Yes, Grandie had heaps of old papers and records. But surely no one thinks anything about that nonsense now," said Beth, indignantly.

"Not so as they'll admit it, but it has an influence," persisted the lady in the ill-fitting auto coat. "All I ever heard was that no one could live in the house 'count of the disturbances, and I was in the real estate office one day when Hiram Todd said if he didn't rent or sell the place soon, he would begin to believe the stories were true.

Now, he didn't go into details," she hurried to explain, as both her listeners smiled incredulously. "But Hiram is quick-tempered and testy, and spoiled, you know. He's done so much big business lately, with city folks moving in and paying all sorts of foolish prices for anything with a roof on it—and lots of them couldn't honestly be called roofs—well, when an agent can't sell a lovely, old place like that, of course he must share any wild suspicions. You were right, Torrington, to come direct down and look things over. And now, if you are finished, we'll all just go up to my little place. Tut, tut!" as Beth tried to object. "You are all coming right along with me. Doggie, too. I know him!

"Saw you gran'dad educatin' him just before he was called. And I have no objection to a well-behaved little dog. Torrington, just take your sister out to that runaway car, as long as you are sure you can manage it. Then Beth and I'll wait, while you get an expressman for the wheel chair. You can't imagine what a blessing you will be to me. You can guess perhaps how desperate I was when I invested in that car." And the only possible weakness in the arrangements might have been the fact that Aunt Martha could not know that a motherly woman had promptly

come to the rescue of helpless, but hopeful, Beth Brandon and her loyal brother Torry.

Even Zippy rode away in the capricious little roadster, for Selma sat with Torry, while Beth and Miss Abbie sighed with relief on the back seat, and Zippy cuddled in the robe at their feet.

Truly the law of compensation was operating with scientific accuracy just then.

CHAPTER V

NOT AS PER SCHEDULE

THE following morning dawned warm and sultry over the heads of the Wayfarers, and Aunt Martha felt obliged to suggest a hasty retreat out of the city into the more open country places.

"Even for a little sightseeing," she urged, "we would not be wise to stay in Boston in this spell of heavy weather. Just see, the fog is fairly steaming everywhere!"

"Yes, Auntie," agreed Patsy amicably, "we really must keep moving until we reach a verdant valley, or rocky cliffs somewhere. Our plans were to rest one day in Boston. Don't you think you could stand just one day? Then we shall journey on to Plymouth."

"Well," reluctantly, "I suppose one day will not be intolerable, but, my dear, I do feel this oppressive weather, and I have not quite your

youthful energy. Still, if you girls can put in the day safely, looking about without me, I shall be content just to stay in and try to keep cool."

"Ducky Darling!" Patsy answered with a little hug, not too violent for it was indeed a stuffy day. "We do want to run into a few shops, and then I would like to point out a couple of landmarks to the girls. But you know, Auntie, we don't want you to sizzle up, just to give us the chance for sightseeing."

"Oh, it is not so warm, really, just heavy and humid. Tell me exactly where you propose going, and be sure to telephone me by twelve o'clock. Then I will know you are safe," concluded the little woman, ever apprehensive of the possible danger in strange cities.

"Or we might scatter a campfire trail of paper snips," teased Patsy.

"Why not take a hatchet—and nick the posts along the way?" offered Beatrice. The suggestion was made to offset Patsy's, and not to discount the caution expressed by Aunt Martha.

"No need of either, if Mab just waves her handkerchief now and then, and allows that perfume to make a trail," said Bee, cynically. "It would be a lot better as a trail than used as——"

"Now, Bee-ee," interrupted Mab, "you know

I took that from nice little Winnie Leighton as a good-bye gift. It is a bit aggressive, I'll admit, but it can afford to be. Came all the way from London!"

"I prefer the American vintage," insisted Bee, "although it was thoughtful of Winnie to get rid of the bottle that way. Wouldn't wonder but the same thing happened to her when *she* left England. Why didn't you keep the chain moving by giving it to Beth Brandon for Zippy's bath?"

"Zippy's 'bawth,' if you please, Bee," corrected Patsy. "We can at least learn a few Boston words while we're here, and 'bawth' is like a vocal exercise."

This was the cue for trying on the broad "A" in many of its most conspicuous Boston selections, until terminology must have trembled for its honors in the mouths of the reckless Wayfarers. It is, perhaps, easy enough to say "bawth," but who, not a native, can give the simple little word "car" that quaint sound, neither Irish nor Scotch, but just New English?

The girls were ready for their city jaunt, and whatever "trail" was actually decided upon, none was apparent as they left the hotel in a shower of dutiful promises to Aunt Martha.

"Because I lost Beth's card," said Patsy, "I am going directly to the hotel she said they would stop at. I must find out where the venerable, available homestead is. I feel sure we shall want to spend our real vacation in some such haunt."

"But how could we keep house alone, without maids?" queried Mab, timidly.

"Hast forgotten our brave promise to do something worth while this summer? Where, now, is the call of the Welfare Special or the Field Worker's Sacrifice? Fie! Fie! Mabsie! As if we four girls could not keep house for a few weeks in a quaint old homestead! Besides, Beth said a reliable gardener gardened there. He may have a wife," deduced Patsy.

"All right, Pat. I'll try anything once. But I cannot help feeling you are heading us straight for trouble—adventure, I mean. Just see how we met the Brandons, and how at once we all became friends! Isn't it rather unusual for us, the real, old original and only Wayfarers, to call a girl 'Beth' at the first meeting?"

"Here we are at our first big dry goods store," interrupted Patsy, as they paused before one of the large merchantile houses on Washington Street. "Let us run in here and have a few minutes' talk in the rest room. I have not wanted

to arouse Aunt Martha's suspicions by taking any chances before her."

"Now, I knew it!" exclaimed Nell gleefully. "You *have* got a mystery already seething, Pat. I have been wondering how you managed to keep so respectfully tame for these first days out. But I know I am going to love it, Pat," with a surreptitious squeeze of Patsy's arm. "I don't think we have ever met nicer folks than Torry——"

"Now, now," cautioned her sister Mab. "I don't want to make any such report as that of your interest in a perfectly fascinating young man, Sis, as I am responsible for all news to the home circle this week. Still—" and she made a pretty little mouth—"Torry is a very nice boy."

They made their way through the big department store, glancing with interest at the displays so like, yet so unlike, those of New York; for while the fashion of both cities are fundamentally alike, their choice is always individually different.

Bee and Mab went to the notion counter, while Patsy and Nell continued through the main aisle bound for the elevator. The desultory patronage of that hour evinced something of the sea coast's influence, in white serge suits, the carefree Panama hats, or gauzy voiles with jade green jaunty toques and flaring, floating veils—in this

the attire worn through Boston's streets differed materially from such costumes as might be seen under similar conditions in New York City. Also the patrons seemed to have time to look around, and many were admittedly doing nothing else.

As Patsy and Nell entered the elevator, their attention was drawn to two young girls in the uniform of the store, who seemed so deeply interested in their own conversation as to be oblivious to those crowded about them in the car.

"I never was so surprised——" one exclaimed.

"Would you ever believe he would bring her to Boston?"

"I suppose we should have gone back to see her——"

"Well, I guess not," from the sharp-faced, darker girl. Both were dark, and unquestionably sisters.

"And he has to carry her in and out to reach the chair——"

Patsy glanced at the girl who said this, and only the sudden stopping of the elevator prevented a more direct challenge.

"Just wait——" sneered the younger girl, entirely unconscious of Patsy's glaring eyes. "If they think they can come down here, and settle things their own way, they've got another guess

coming." They stepped out of the car. "I'll see you at lunch," said the taller girl.

"Wait!" called the sister. "Did Torry——"

Again the two clerks put their heads together in a moment stolen from their business, and which was obtained in spite of watchful supervisors. Then they were lost in the shopping crowds, and Patsy turned to meet Bee and Mab, just landing from the escalator.

"Did you hear those girls?" asked Nellie indignantly.

"Certainly I did. And did you hear them say 'Torry'?"

"Yes, come over to the rest room," piloted Nell. "I am sure they are at least a faction of the dissenting relations."

Briefly the fragmentary conversation overheard in the elevator was recounted to Bee and Mab, and all sorts of interesting conjectures were offered.

"If we had just dared to enter in some conversation and then ask if they happened to know where Beth Brandon's grandfather's farm was situated," soliloquized Mab.

"Oh, how perfectly silly!" exclaimed Nell. "As if we could put that sort of question to two absolute strangers!"

"Oh, of course," faltered Mab, flushing a little. "But it was just a possible straw, and——"

"Every little straw helps, Mabsie," said Patsy considerately. "As a matter of fact, those girls seem to know the very thing we are so anxious to find out, yet we cannot go right up to them with the simple question. They looked rather—well, antagonistic, don't you think so?"

"I should say they are antagonistic!" declared Bee. "That one with the sharp nose seemed capable of stabbing one with her disposition, bare-fisted."

"Rather a scrambled simile, Bee," said Nell. "But I guess we comprehend. I would nickname that one the Wasp. I fancy she's sharp enough and not very particular about the stinging act."

"Look!" exclaimed Patsy. "There goes the very lady! Come on over to her counter and buy something."

"She may be in the quilts and comfortables," scoffed Nell.

"No matter, even at that we could price a quilt —a New England creation for our hope chest," insisted Patsy. "Come along, quick," and she dragged Bee on one side and Mab on the other, while Nell tagged on the end.

"The Wasp" had already taken her place be-

hind a counter, and when the Wayfarers faced it—behold—the display, neatly uncovered in feet and ankles, was of men's hose!

Mabel, the baby of the group, tittered outright, but Patsy was courageous. She just threw up her pretty bronze head with its blue brimmed sailor, and attacked that counter.

"Pat!" begged Bee. "See what you are going to buy!"

"I know," calmly replied Pat. "Dad needs size—let me see, size—I know he wears a seventeen collar." But even the unconquerable Pat was stalled on the size of socks.

"Is he a—big man?" ventured the clerk, none other than the girl with the pointed nose.

"Oh, yes, daddy is as big as—let me see," and Patsy dared glance about for a man of dad's size! A floor-walker approaching seemed to meet the requirements, and she leaned over the counter to point him out, in a very cautious whisper.

"His size," repeated the girl recklessly. "Oh, Mr. Glennon——"

"Wait a minute," implored Patsy, now frightened at the possible danger of this silly clerk asking the man the size of his foot. "I think I had better wait, and get the correct measurements,"

and before the clerk could offer objection, the Wayfarers fled.

They were choked with laughter, and Patsy's cheeks threatened to ignite from sheer, flaming confusion.

"My word!" she gasped, pausing in the shelter of a floral arch erected to display the perfume goods. "Wasn't that a narrow escape?"

"Worse than that," insisted Bee, "it was a mere hairbreadth escape. If I had not been standing directly in front of her, that clerk would have made the handsome floor-walker hear her request."

"She may only have wanted him to sign her book," suggested Mab. "How do we know she was going to inquire for his manly foot measure?"

"Let us hope you are right, Mab dear, but I shall not soon forget the fright. Never again shall I approach the gent's furnishing for my hope-chest accessories." And the very nonsense of it set the entire quartette into a perfect gale of laughter.

Suddenly the gong sounded twelve o'clock.

"Telephone Aunt Martha!" exclaimed Mab. "Where might we find a booth?"

"There, near the elevator," replied Bee. "But

what can we say? We haven't looked for the Brandons yet."

"We still have an hour before lunch at our hotel," replied Patsy. "We may be able to make the inquiry as we return. I'll phone first," and she stepped into the booth with her coin in her hand ready to drop it into the mechanical slot.

The other girls found seats about, and waited. Patsy had not closed the door of the booth, and she spoke to them while awaiting her call. A few seconds passed and the reply came that room number 24 had not answered.

"But I'm sure the party is waiting for this call," insisted Patsy. "Please try again."

After five full minutes' waiting, however, the Wayfarers were obliged to give the call up, and, very much perplexed, they started off to their own hotel.

"Aunt Martha must be in," reasoned Patsy. "But we have to make sure she is all right. Let's hurry along," she prompted nervously.

"I wish I had stayed with her," spoke Nell regretfully.

"Oh, she is surely there, perhaps just stepped out of her room," assured Bee. "Aunt Martha wanted to rest alone this morning. She must

tire occasionally of our prattle, but she is always so sweet about it."

Patsy was silent. Even the possibility of a wire crossed, or a mixup in the call, did not entirely reassure her, and they quickened their steps toward the Fremont Hotel, to make sure of the safety of little Aunt Martha.

"Surely nothing could have happened," Nellie murmured.

"No, I really don't feel anything has," Patsy assured her, "but——"

"There are endless reasons why she may not have been there just then," reasoned Mab.

"So we will hurry along and find out which reason is responsible," concluded Beatrice.

CHAPTER VI

MISSING: ONE LITTLE AUNT MARTHA

"NOT here!" almost gasped Patsy, entering the ominously-quiet room, where Aunt Martha's belongings spoke mutely of her mysterious absence.

"She may be in the lounge," suggested Nell, visibly agitated, but nevertheless clear in judgment.

Patsy picked up the wall telephone, and inquiry at the office brought out the fact that "Miss Carroll had gone out and her key was now on the rack." The girls had entered with their own key, and Aunt Martha's room was connected with theirs.

"Gone out?" repeated Patsy, vaguely turning from the telephone. "Where can she have gone to?"

"I heard her speak of those peculiarly pretty flowers in the windows, as we came in," recalled

Mab. "Perhaps she just walked out to get some of those."

"But we could have brought her anything of that kind, and the day is so stuffy." Patsy wrinkled her brow and showed deep anxiety. It was reasonable enough, perhaps, for Aunt Martha to stroll out, but she would surely be back for lunch, and the clock now indicated fifteen minutes to one o'clock.

"Shall we walk out and look around?" asked Bee. They suddenly all seemed so woefully helpless. That anything might happen to dear, sweet little Aunt Martha was too horrible to even conjecture.

Patsy sighed and brushed her hand over flickering eyelids.

"We will have to wait for a few minutes, I suppose," she decided. "There is no use in getting panic-stricken. After all, it is broad daylight, and Auntie is always so careful and capable."

But, somehow, this very statement echoed its own emptiness like shouting into a rain barrel.

Patsy jumped up, clapped her hat on again and decided to go downstairs to look about the exchange. Some caller might be detaining Aunt Martha there.

"Suppose Nell and I stay here?" proposed Mab. "Then, when she comes, she won't have to worry about *us.*"

"All right," agreed Patsy. "But hadn't you better go down for lunch?"

"No, indeed," objected Nell. "I couldn't eat a morsel until we find Aunt Martha."

"Nor I," added Mab. "Don't worry about our lunch, Pat; that is of small consequence."

How quickly they were seized with gloom and alarm! And, after all, as Patsy said, there seemed so little real cause. But it was about Aunt Martha, the caretaker, the beloved counsellor and the dear, wise, thoughtful companion. And that made a difference.

Minutes passed, then a half hour and finally an hour! It was two o'clock and no word nor trace had come to light. Patsy and Bee had been phoning in, looking first in the nearest possible places, the little book store at the corner, the drug store and the florist's in the big basement; but no trace of the missing one had been unearthed. Finally, in panic, the girls all came together in the hotel exchange, and decided on sipping a cup of tea and nibbling a biscuit, for they had not taken any lunch. Then Patsy and

Bee inquired for the police station, and, with warranted perturbation, hurried to the place.

"No accident reported," answered the desk sergeant, taking the name and hotel address. "But why worry in the broad daylight? She may just be out seeing the city."

"No, she wouldn't leave us so long, Officer," Patsy insisted. Her voice trembled, and her eyes were hazy now. Surely something dreadful must have happened!

"Sorry I can't help you just now," said the sergeant. "But if you want to enter a search-request——"

"I don't know," demurred Patsy. "Of course my aunt would feel bady to excite publicity, if you think we should wait. But, really, where could she go?"

The big man smiled broadly. Just frightened young girls, he was evidently deciding. As he held his pen to make an entry, in the big police "blotter," another officer stepped up.

"What's the description?" he asked his superior, respectfully.

Patsy told how Aunt Martha would be dressed, and gave all other enlightening details.

"I think I can solve your mystery," the second officer said very kindly to Patsy. "At about

eleven o'clock I saw a woman answering that description, exactly. She was toting a lost boy home. I noticed her just at Tremont Street, when I was pulling my box. The youngster was crying——"

"That must be it!" interrupted Patsy, relief echoing in her voice, "Aunt Martha would do just that. I knew she would never go off on a pleasure jaunt and leave us to worry. But wouldn't she be back now?"

"She ought to," assented the officer.

"Did you take the boy's address?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, I jotted it down, luckily." He took out his notebook from an inside coat pocket, and offered the desk man his brief record. The other glanced over it.

"Rather a poor neighborhood," the sergeant remarked.

"I told the lady that, but she insisted on taking the youngster home. I hailed a taxi for her."

"A taxi!" repeated Bee. The relief brought with the clue was now slipping back into a new anxiety.

"Yes, I know the driver personally," vouched the officer.

"Suppose you young ladies just go back to

your hotel, and we'll send a man to make inquiries," suggested the officer at the desk.

"Couldn't we go? I should feel much better to go——"

The telephone, tingling, interrupted Patsy as the sergeant turned to answer it.

"Oh, all right. Yes, right here. Want to speak to her?" he asked. Then:

"Miss Carroll, your aunt is back safely. She's on the wire."

Patsy swung open the brass railed gate, and had the 'phone receiver in her hand before the sentence was finished.

"Are you all right, Auntie?" she demanded, hurriedly.

"Yes, we will be right up," came the next sentence.

"No, we didn't make any police entry—just inquired——"

"Of course that was very simple—to take a wrong car, with the subway entrances to elevators. All right, dear. We'll be right back in ten minutes. Not a bit frightened, just a little anxious——"

Patsy turned from the 'phone, with a blush for apology.

"She got lost, of course. The wrong car, and

such delays! But she says she has had a most interesting experience."

"She would be sure to have that, from a visit in such a section. Glad you are all fixed up, however. It isn't a bad idea to make inquiries promptly. If everyone did that we would be better able to keep things checked up," commented the officer pleasantly.

"Do we need to leave any details, name or anything?" asked Patsy, anxious to do her part, even in all the hurry to get back to her aunt.

"No, none whatever," said the sergeant affably. "Glad to have been of service."

On wings of joy Patsy and Bee flew back to the Fremont.

Aunt Martha was taking tea from a tray, while Mab and Nell fluttered about.

"My dear children," exclaimed the little lady, "I am so very sorry! You must have been dreadfully alarmed, to go to the police station."

"No, indeed. We love to go to police stations, don't we, Bee? But where's your boy? I thought you had adopted him?" demanded Patsy.

"Oh, that boy!" sighed Aunt Martha. "I don't wonder he wandered away. But, girls, let us get out of these things and freshen up. I feel like——"

"We know," interrupted Patsy. "Our nice officers said your jaunt would be interesting, if a bit unusual. Slums, Auntie! How did you like Social Service?"

"I do believe I would not have wandered off away out in those dreadful places if your Social Service chatter had not buzzed in my ears," said Aunt Martha, hastily divesting herself of the garments she had sullied in the slums. "I shall have to take a long time to tell you all about it, and it is very interesting," she admitted frankly.

Tea and a light luncheon had been brought up to the girls, and their relief from the anxiety caused by Miss Carroll's unaccountable disappearance was marked by a ceaseless flow of questions, which Aunt Martha vainly tried to satisfy with intelligent answers.

Finally Patsy attempted to sum up the entire episode.

"First, Auntie," she checked off, "you felt like taking a trolley ride——"

"Well, not exactly that, dear, but I did feel like taking a little stroll, since I realized we were only going to stay in this wonderful old city a single day."

"But we will stay longer if you wish, Auntie," Patsy hastened to offer. "We have a schedule

of absolute elasticity, and we go or come just as we please. The only stipulation being—and we have all agreed upon it—that we shall retire to a suitable retreat for a complete rest for the last month. This present month is to be a free-for-all tournament in adventure."

"Still, I feel we should go to Plymouth," insisted Aunt Martha. "This is the summer of the Tercentenary, and you students must glean a store of historical lore from the celebration at Provincetown, on the tip of Cape Cod."

"Very well, dear, we don our caps and bibbers on the morrow. But do not let us wander, now, from your own adventure. You went for a walk——"

"And I was so interested in the shop windows, I must confess, that I just kept going farther and farther, until in front of a florist's I found the little boy crying—oh, so bitterly!" Aunt Martha paused. The boy's plight still affected her visibly.

"However did he get so far from his home?" asked Bee.

"The child was like a picture," replied Aunt Martha. "He was ragged and barefoot, and had a scrap of a cap on such a shock of brown curls——"

"Auntie Mattie Carroll!" exclaimed Patsy. "And you let a duck of a boy like that escape us! Why, just think what a model we might have made of him!"

"You may do so yet," spoke Aunt Martha. "If you girls could have had a glimpse of the place that child lives in! Mercy me! I shudder to think of it. And his poor, worn, suffering little mother!" Aunt Martha brushed her glasses, but that act did not take the haze from her sympathetic voice.

"And you gave him a ride in a cab, Aunt Mattie?" said Nell. "Really, girls, I'm envious. Just think what we missed!"

"My dears, that little fellow had tramped in all the way to the city with his pink pond lilies, and it was the flowers that first attracted my attention. When I came up to him he was looking so forlornly into the flower shop, and almost hugging his own flowers to death. I asked him what was the matter, and all the poor child could do was to sob and cry. I offered to buy all his lilies."

"Now, Auntie, that is a violation of the Social Service code," Patsy interrupted. "You should have investigated his story. Tears and pond lilies are a pretty powerful argument, I'll admit,

Auntie mine, but when you put them on the background of a cherub-child—well, I don't wonder you capitulated."

"And when the police officer came up you scorned his aid," teased Bee. "He told us he offered to take the boy home, didn't he, Pat?"

"As if I would allow an officer to put his hand on that helpless child!" disdained the little lady, now fanning herself excitedly in the big leather chair.

"Bravo!" cried Nell, jumping up to press her lips on the lady's cheek. "Spoken like a true member of the Wayfarers! And you spurned the iron hand of the law from polluting those innocent—shoulders," she finished, making an awful fluke of her attempt at eloquence. Nell was so pretty, and such a baby, that everything she said seemed "adorable," as Patsy usually termed the efforts.

"But the house, Aunt Martha? The poor woman's home? Do tell us about all that," begged Mab.

"It is such a long story," sighed Miss Carroll, "and some of the details are rather depressing. Suppose we go out to the porch, off your room, Patsy, and I'll try to tell you some of it there? The afternoon is almost gone, and we won't have

another in Boston until we come back. I am so sorry I have upset your day."

But how could she know then, that the rescue of the little boy with the pink pond lilies would form an important link in the chain of their summer's adventure?

"Now for a real, live story," announced Patsy.

"I'm so glad there's a boy in it," whispered Nell.

"I hope, Auntie, you are not too worn-out with all this," said Bee, leading the way to the porch.

"Oh, no, dear! I think the excitement is rather exhilarating," Aunt Martha replied, as they all settled down to listen to her story.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOMINANT PATSY

"THE woman is a widow, who showed by her really skillful management of that humble home, that she must have been a capable houseworker," recounted Aunt Martha. "Such ingenious arrangements! Can you imagine a hammock swung above a little cot? The mother sleeps in the lower berth and my boy—Rolly—sleeps in the hammock. And the affection between that mother and son! As I waited to make sure that he was really in his own home, I felt like an intruder," and the dignified little woman fidgeted to cover the embarassing memory.

"Rolly!" repeated Mab. "I suppose his name is Rowland."

"Yes, I asked and that was the very answer given, Mabel. I did not just recall what name Rolly was taken from," said Miss Carroll. "It

seems the mother was housekeeper, and her husband a man of all work for some old family out in the country. When the last of the family died, an old man, I believe, these servants experienced a very great disappointment. The will left nothing to them, and it had always been supposed that the delicate man was to be remembered. The woman insisted it did not mean so much to her, as she stoutly claimed the old gentleman had a perfect right to do as he pleased with his own property; but the man was seriously affected by the disappointment, as he had been sort of promised a small income, and had his plans made to go into business. His wife said the loss 'took the heart out of him,' and he only lived a short time after the death of his old friend and employer," concluded Aunt Martha.

"Another will gone wrong," quoth Patsy. "Be warned, my friends! I shall leave no tricky document, instead I shall order every lap of land turned into true, gold coin, which I may scatter regally from my satin-covered couch," and she almost lost her pretty Japanese fan over the edge of the little balcony, in a wild attempt to prematurely "scatter things royally."

"I have the woman's name and the address of the place," went on Aunt Martha, importance

shaping her sentences. "And I intend to do something worth while for that brave little person."

"And for Rolly of the Pink Pond Lilies," added Patsy, with a tinge of the melodramatic. "Can we get around there again to-day?"

"Oh, my dear child, no!" promptly objected the aunt. "Isn't one loosing a day sufficient even for the Wayfarers?"

"But we don't hold that against you, Auntie dear. And just consider what you have done in Social Service," complimented Patsy. "But, girls!" she exclaimed, jumping up suddenly, "we have not yet inquired about the Brandons' hotel! Come on down this minute, somebody, while I telephone."

Mabel ran along to the lobby with Patsy, where a convenient booth usually provided more prompt service than did the phones in the private rooms.

The hotel she called answered, but Patsy was very much disappointed in the reply.

Rooms had been reserved for Mr. Brandon and his sister, the clerk stated, but the reservations were cancelled yesterday afternoon.

Patsy dropped the receiver with undisguised disappointment.

"Now, we have lost them outright!" she ex-

claimed. "And we all hoped to keep up that interesting acquaintance!" She was annoyed and plainly grieved to have so soon lost trace of the newly made friends. But how could the Wayfarers know that gentle, motherly Miss Abbie Truesdell had taken the brother and sister under her loving wing, and so changed all the first made plans for hotel accommodations?

"Do you suppose Beth may have fallen ill, and perhaps had to be taken to a hospital?" ventured Mabel.

"Oh, no, Mab. I wouldn't ever imagine anything as morbid as that. More likely the brother has hurried her off from the warm city. Perhaps they have even gone to the lovely old homestead which we have also lost trace of in this unprecedented mixup. I do believe it is better, after all, to have a real schedule, and stick to it," admitted Patsy, her pretty face spoiling itself with a horrid scowl.

When Aunt Martha and the other girls were told of the second lost address, the little lady said: "Now, my dears, this looks to me like an intended rebuke to our sudden gushing over the strangers. I believe we shall have to eliminate them from our summer's programme. Although——"

"Auntie Mattie Carroll!" exclaimed Patsy, jumping to the figure in the wicker chair and pretending to stop, with her slender hand, the words framing on the lady's lips. "You know perfectly well, you don't think anything of the kind! How could you?"

The vehemence and excitement under which the bronze-haired girl struggled brought upon her a very shower of torment.

"Why, Pat!" exclaimed Bee. "Don't take it so hard!"

"Paddie, dear, we will get the Boston bellman out if you are going to suffer that way from the loss," teased Nell.

"All the same," soothed Mab, throwing her arms around the perturbed Patsy, "it *is* a shame! And just when we had the stage all set, with Torry and Beth as stars in our summer thriller. Don't you mind, Pat, I am sure they'll come back. Wasn't Beth to write us?"

"Yes, of course, but——" Patsy was kindling with the flame of actual irritation. Not that her temper was ever really ungovernable, in spite of the "red-headed" alibi, but to lose all trace of her friends, and the prospect of the lovely big camping homestead! Wasn't that aggravating, to put it politely?

Aunt Martha was obviously distressed. Her indifferent remark was intended to pacify, not to excite, her favorite niece. But Patsy was so soundly loyal, that the very suspicion of deserting a friend aroused her indignation.

"I am sure, dear," soothed the little lady, "the young girl will write you. Don't forget her good brother has undertaken to provide her with some very special and skillful surgical attention. That may account for the change of plans."

"Yes, that's so, Auntie," conceded Patsy, returning to her normal happy mood. "Do you suppose we might make inquiries at the hospital?"

"No, I'm afraid not, dear. You see, it was not exactly hospital treatment she was to undergo, but the advice and care of some noted specialist. I believe I may recall his name, but not to-day. My head is rather upset——"

"No wonder, you poor dear," interrupted the leader of the Wayfarers, "and, after all your exciting adventure, to think that thoughtless, heartless, reckless Pat should be putting you through the third degree! I'm ashamed of a girl named Pat," and she bumped her head against the porch post. "Come along, kid-doodles. It's time to doll up. Who knows but some of our loves of

other years may be stopping at this very hotel?" and Patsy led the way indoors, by lending a very sympathetic arm to the frail little Aunt Martha.

"Do lie down and rest a while, Auntie," counselled Mab. "We make such a fuss and flutter in dressing, I am sure we must get on your tired nerves."

"Now, young ladies," protested she who excited the stream of attention, "if I were not young enough and healthy enough and reasonable enough to enjoy your little whimsical nonsense, I would have made a very great mistake by coming along to put a check on your exuberance. There, Pat; am I not improving in my methods? Doesn't that sound a little bit Patsyesque?"

"Carrollesque, rather," answered the beaming girl, altogether happy again in spite of the wicked elf of disappointment, snatching from the summer day one little item of cherished expectancy.

But a kinder fairy heard the plaint, and bided a chance to mollify.

"Isn't it too mean about the Brandon's?" persisted Nell, while slipping into her prettiest orchid organdie.

"Yes, isn't it? I had a wonderful plot all woven around them for our summer thriller,"

admitted Bee, "but it looks now as if we shall have to depend upon Aunt Martha's Rolly."

"And the pink pond lilies," added Patsy. "I must say little Rolly makes an attractive setting, but I am not giving up Beth and Torry, for all that."

"We know perfectly well you are not," spoke Mab decisively. "Depend upon Pat to catch the wily, squirming fish of adventure, as it wiggles and waggles away."

"Ho! Ho! Mab!" shouted Patsy. "Every time you try a simile you skid. Or was this one a fish chowder? But I know exactly what you mean, Mabsie, and I thank you for 'them kind words.' You may hope to see me make good on the prediction, or might I say predilection? It seems we did favor our first-found friends, and we also spotted a real wild time taming the old homestead. Oh, me!" and she sighed dramatically. "Where is my wandering boy to-night?" and she tra-la-laa-ed shamelessly, to carry the tune to a retarding finish.

But that evening at the hotel no incident occurred to justify Patsy's hope in some actual, interesting coincidence. No one appeared in the dining room, in whom the Wayfarers might have professed personal interest, and later in the ex-

change, in the lounge and in the big old-fashioned parlors, the combination of passe toilette and antiquated musical talent, that did things to the poor, helpless piano, all combined to convince the girls that a summer stay in Boston was entirely a period of stern necessity.

"Only the business men look sharp and alive," commented Nell, with dejection fairly oozing through her manner and voice, "and I'm glad we are leaving for Plymouth in the morning." She brushed out her pretty organdie frock, as if its appearance in that unappreciative hotel had been entirely useless.

"What did you expect of a city hotel in summer, dear?" asked her sister kindly. "I am sure that family with the lovely twin girls looked at us as if they liked us, at any rate."

"And we looked the same sort of pity at them," pouted the sister. "I just wish I hadn't opened my trunk! Now I'll have to get everything back again, and I never even wore my lovely new pongee once."

"Goes to show!" warned Patsy, using her newly acquired, if inadequate, idiom. "Goes to show! Pongees and organdies are not suitable for Social Service work. How about our Welfare Special? Don't you all think we should

have chartered it and driven out to Rolly's in it? Isn't it lovely to have to admit that Aunt Martha's little old taxi was so very much more effective than our boasted, but elusive, highly equipped Special?"

"What are you driving at, Pat? I saw you making notes of everything Aunt Martha said about that little boy and his surroundings. Is he going to be our first real case?" asked the studious and keen-witted Beatrice. Beatrice was the only one of the Wayfarers who had ever known some of the real privations of life, and her experience, when she helped a widowed mother by adding her own earnings, gleaned from practical teachings, qualified her now to serve as sort of professional member of the little group. Patsy Carroll's own altruism was responsible for the place Beatrice held among her appreciative friends, and a change in her home conditions did not lessen her interest in the problems of those less fortunate.

Beatrice Forbes was a serious student of Social Service, and she was fast spreading for the science a favorable influence among her companions.

"I suppose I may as well own up," spoke Patsy, finally, as the few guests dwindled away

from the hotel parlors. "I have a new theory. I believe if every case needing help was helped by those who discover it, the wholesale charity problem would be solved; and I mean to try this theory on, by visiting to-morrow morning, Rolly of the Pink Pond Lilies."

"But Aunt Martha said we wouldn't have time?" objected the restless Nell.

"No such condition is recognized in my schedule," said Patsy, grandly. And the meaningless statement was accepted without further parleys.

CHAPTER VIII

ROLLY OF THE PINK POND LILIES

AUNT MARTHA finally agreed, as Patsy was certain she would; and with the understanding that the wise and prudent Beatrice should accompany the bronze-haired, impulsive Patsy, the first real journey into the realm of family service was entered upon next morning.

"We must not delay," cautioned Bee. "The train leaves for Plymouth at one-thirty, and to make it we must get back at least an hour before luncheon."

"I could get my things ready in a much shorter time, Bee," replied Patsy, "but I am willing to admit they would be just pegged in *ad lib*. Yours, I know, will be folded in brand-new creases, to uncrease the old folds."

"Poor Mabel seems to resent the lack of good times we appear to have fallen upon," continued

Bee, ignoring Patsy's naïve compliment. "But the contrast will be all the more enjoyable when we actually get under sail. You see, Pat, I am already assuming marine parlance. I have always heard that Cape Cod folks just eat, drink, sleep and express themselves nautically."

"Was that what ailed you last night, Bee? I recognized a new note in your snore, but was not sure it was nautical. Now I know it belonged to the fog-horn variety," joked Patsy.

"Tease away, Pat; I'm ready for action now. I always feel lazy for the first two or three weeks after school closes. Better give Bee and Mab all the timetables, and the directions for our Plymouth trip."

"You are right, Bee, as you always are. I wonder what we would do without your wisdom? Yes, we must arrange in advance about baggage, and all that. I am sure Mab and Nell will be happy to attend to everything that means the start of our real vacation. They insist upon one hundred per cent fun. Now you and I are content with a mere speculator's interest." Patsy fluttered out to Mabel and Eleanor, turning over to them literally the stewardship of their next journey.

"And of course, because we are going, every-

thing looks lovely in Boston," grumbled the rather irresponsible Mabel. "I should like to go see the public gardens, the Bunker Hill Monument, some of the old historic churches and even the sight of the Boston Tea Party would thrill me this morning, under that lovely, deep-blue sky, with its real lace cloudlet-curtains, and summery draperies. I never go into poetry, you know, girls, but I got up early, and took a bird's-eye view from our little balcony. I feel, in consequence, that I owe Boston an apology."

"I accept it for good old Boston," answered Patsy. "But the sights you mention, Mab dear, are not all piled up together on the Commons. They are scattered all over this big city, and you could not possibly do more than see one or two special favorites in this short morning."

"But I haven't an idea of seeing them," corrected Mab. "Indeed, sis and I are going to stay right here, and keep Aunt Martha under our eyes every minute you and Bee are away, Patsy. We don't want any more lost children to lead our little Auntie astray. I was really only talking about sight-seeing in Boston, because I had been so cross, and, well, so grouchy about this stop over," she admitted naïvely.

"Oh, I see," replied Patsy archly. "You sing

the praises of the city you leave behind. All right, dear; we may come back this way in better weather, and then see all the sights. Just now Bee and I are going——" she whispered and gave a funny little click of her heels and a very girlish twist of her lithe form, "you know we are going on our first Social Service expedition. Wish us luck, we need it. Come along, Bee, got your notebook and pencil, of course. Good-bye, Auntie dear, and don't worry about us," she called into the next room where Miss Carroll was busy packing her bag. "The way out to Hanover Street is just as simple as a walk down our own lane. The trouble with your trip was, first that the taxi man wanted to make money, and second, your home route was turned inside out. You looked for a subway when you should have been satisfied with a surface car. We're off this time. I'll bring you all some pink pond lilies, if you're real good," and the adventurous Patsy whisked herself out to the elevator with the more dignified Beatrice Forbes following as close as the whisking process allowed.

"Bee, darling," began Patsy, when they were seated in the trolley going out Haymarket way. "I want to be sure I have the Social Service lesson all prepared." She consulted her little

blue notebook. "First,—Establish confidential relations. That means, of course, I must make Rolly very confidential?"

"Not Rolly, Pat, but Rolly's mother," corrected Beatrice.

"All right," with a scratched memorandum. "Rolly's mother. Next,—Self-revelation! Not, not really! I don't have to reveal myself!" exclaimed Patsy.

"No, the client reveals *herself*. She tells you about herself, without you asking her questions."

"Oh, I see," again the fountain pen scratched. "And third—Clues—clues—why, there's no mystery; is there?"

"Always, else there would be no problem. Clues mean a clue to the solution of the case."

"Lovely! Bee, I am going to love this! I have always fancied I would make a good detective."

"Well, girlie, a good or efficient Social Service worker must be a good detective, and I rather agree with you, Pat, you would do well in that line. I think the work fascinating."

"So do I; I am just thrilled to the bone at the prospects we are facing. But wait a minute. I must get this before we change cars. Fourth,—Client's own plans. Client's," repeated Patsy,

tapping her lips with the end of her pen. "Doesn't that sound professional?"

"It is," declared Bee. "I often wonder why the uninformed public seems so opposed to the professional Social Service worker. None other is ever qualified to touch a sacred charity case. No one else can be trusted to care for the needy, whether they be in need of advice or relief, yet how often we hear folks scoff at the professional worker!"

"Hope I have never been guilty, Bee dear. But I never really knew before, what all those records meant. And I am not, under any circumstances, to show pad or pencil, you say?"

"No, better have your interview a failure than to frighten the client with anything so formidable as pencil or pad," replied the student Beatrice.

"Well, I hope I won't blunder. Just you pinch me, Bee, if I am going off the track. I am really anxious to do something intelligent, but there's no telling what I might do if I fall in love with Rolly. Let me see. He's about ten years old; did Auntie say? Well, I might get a nice smooth stone and sit down to wait for him to grow up! Here's where we change. Don't let me lose cards this time," and she tucked away

the memorandum as they changed for Hanover Street.

The place was reached without difficulty, and the numbers in the block were soon under the searchers' scrutiny.

Beatrice, having covered her hundred hours' field work, as required by the system of Social Service she was studying, found no terrors in the narrow passageways and the uncertain halls that formed the only barrier between the great, heartless, wide world, and those few bare rooms so many families must accept under the name of tenement; but Patsy was not experienced in any sort of slum work, and she now readily allowed her companion to take the lead in their search.

"However did 'Aunt Martha make her way through this?" Patsy asked, for, as usual, the presence of the two well-dressed strangers drew a crowd of curious children and not a few idle women to their heels.

"Lookin' for the Duffys, Miss?" asked a very red-haired girl, with freckles that looked as if they had run while wet, and as if the painter's sign had been disregarded by a pair of active little hands. Her complexion was an awful mix-up, but the freckles were very real, and as defiant

as the two hazel eyes that shone out like danger signals under that blazing canopy of red hair.

"No," replied Bee, "we're not looking for the Duffys——"

"Because they've moved," went on the girl. "They hadda. Their rooms was taken——"

"But we are not looking for the Duffys," interrupted Patsy. "We are looking for Mrs. Sherman." This girl was too generous with her gossip.

"Oh, yes, Sherman," repeated the self-appointed information committee. "Sherman?" she repeated, again glaring at the crowd about her in open demand for a clue to Mrs. Sherman's lodging.

"Aw, she don't know," spoke up a boy contemptuously. "Smarty! Thinks she knows everythin'. She don't know nawthin' but how to chew gum——"

"You go wan, Jim Burns! If you know so much why dontcher tell? Guess I know as many folks as you do around here," and the fiery redhead tossed from side to side, in verification of this broad statement.

Beatrice had allowed the children to talk in this natural way for Patsy's benefit. Not that the urchins of the slums are unlike the children of

the better classes, in fundamental principles, but simply that they do their quarreling in such a picturesque way.

"Tell me honestly, Bee," said Patsy aside, "is my unfortunate head *that* color?"

"No," answered Beatrice frankly, "red hair is always individual. It cannot be matched."

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Patsy. "That, no doubt, is pretty on Freckles, but I should hate to be responsible for it myself. But Beasy, where is Mrs. Sherman's place?"

"There!" exclaimed Bee." "I see Rolly. Just look!"

The houses were of the old red brick type, with stone steps that once might have been handsome and dignified, but now they seemed to emphasize, more pathetically, the poverty hidden behind the almost tumbling walls. On one of these tiers of steps, in front of the second building farther down the street, sat a little boy. His pink pond lilies, unsold, lay beside him on the stone floor and in his arms he held a cat—a pink cat!

"Rolly! That is surely Aunt Martha's Rolly!" declared Patsy, hurrying along to the child, without a thought of her Social Service schedule.

"He's crying," said Bee. "Something the matter with his kitten, I'm positive."

Patsy sprang up two of the four steps.

"What's the matter, little boy?" she asked. "Is your kitty sick?"

"No'm, she *pink,*" he said sadly, brushing away a few straggling tears from his variegated face.

"But that's pretty," ventured Bee. "And it doesn't hurt the kitty."

"Yes'm," said the boy, jabbing at more tears.

"Then what are you crying for?" asked Patsy, despising her own vulgar curiosity. "Why shouldn't a boy cry when his cat has gone pink?" she answered herself, secretly.

"He's Tippy," explained the boy, holding up an inadequate string of fur with a little black tip on the end—this combination composing Tippy's tail. "And now he's all pink, and can't be Tippy," his voice trailed off.

"Are you Rolly Sherman?" inquired Bee, glancing at her wrist watch apprehensively.

"Yes'm," said the boy again, his eyes kindling through the obtrusive tears. "Did you want to see mother?"

"Yes, we do, dear," replied Patsy, following the boy, who still hugged the pink cat. The hall was cluttered and strewn with that sort of refuse

which tenants always seem to discard by way of the public hallway. But Rolly dodged in and out of the boxes and old stuff with the skill of a small boy. Presently he swung open the door that led into his own humble quarters.

"Here's ladies, Mother!" he announced clearly, and the two visitors stood waiting for an answer from within.

A shuffling about betrayed hurried changes, and in a moment there appeared before them a little, brown-haired woman, neatly dressed and wearing the honor badge of good housekeeping, a spic and span gingham apron. Her face was faded, but she smiled bravely.

"My aunt was here yesterday——" began Patsy without much ado. But she was promptly interrupted.

"Oh, yes. The lady who brought Rowland home. Do come in. I'm so sorry we always have to be upset——" She placed two chairs out for her visitors, but both girls stood and tried to hurry the interview.

"We are leaving Boston at noon," said Patsy, "and my aunt was so interested——"

"The sweet little lady," again came the interruption. "I am sure I am deeply grateful."

"She wanted to make sure you were not in

need of anything," faltered Patsy, feeling like a criminal, or a spy. Just then she was positive she would never like Social Service. It was too impertinent. Her cheeks flushed pink, a tone stronger than Rolly's rose-colored cat.

Beatrice smiled as she came to the rescue. It was ever a matter of too much heart and enthusiasm, and too little common sense; the antithesis of Social Service.

"Miss Carroll, this young lady's aunt," began Bee in her best normal school tone, "has become so interested in your little boy that we offered to make another call before leaving Boston." The look Bee gave Patsy recalled "self revelation, without questions."

"It's just like Providence," began the woman, exactly as per schedule. "I've tried to keep things going, and Rolly's been such a good boy. Rolly Sherman, what happened to that kitten?"

"He fell in the pond lily tub," whimpered the disconsolate Rolly. "Will it come off with soap —or 'monia, Mom?"

"Poor Tippy! We'll see, dear. Wait 'till I finish with the ladies," and she waved aside the small boy with the happy, purring, dyed-in-the-pond-lily-bath kitten, the bath being a floral-dye

solution. "As I was saying, Miss, I didn't like to complain, but if I could only get back to the country with my boy!"

"Clues," Patsy was flashing at Bee. Also "client's own plans."

"You see we were used to the country, and the fine old gentleman we worked for always promised my husband he would not forget him. But he did, it seems, and it broke Rol down, and he gave in dreadful to the disappointment," sighed Mrs. Sherman.

"Where did you want to go in the country?" asked Patsy. She was getting anxious about that one-thirty train with lunch in advance.

"Oh, any place, I couldn't say where. But, of course, it would seem like home to go out Beryton way. There are not many big houses out there, and I suppose there's a lot of them to rent since the big woolen mill at Thriftville closed down," she finished wistfully.

"Is it pretty out that way?" pressed Patsy, in spite of Bee's warning glances that time was really flying.

"Pretty?" repeated the woman. "It's the loveliest spot in Massachusetts! The wild sebatia grows about there; the river laps the hills and trees! I think the homestead we lived on was

just a bit of Paradise," and pardonable tears mellowed her voice.

"I'll tell you," said Patsy impulsively, "you write out there and find out if we could get a place to rent for the month of August, and if we get one we shall take you and Rolly along with us. There now, boy, will that make it all right for Tippy's complexion? Do you want to go to the country again?"

"The pond lilies grow out there," declared Rolly, as if that answered for his pleasure at the offered prospect. "Can get all you want, an' apples 'n' everything!"

"Well, you just be a good boy, and here, Mrs. Sherman, is a little advance money, because we are surely going some place to live next month, and we are just as sure of needing your help." The woman flushed as she took the bills. Beatrice bit her lips to check the smile threatening. Who could teach Patsy Carroll the ways of Social Service?

"I'll write to-day," declared Mrs. Sherman, brightening, "and maybe I can get the old place itself. If it isn't sold or rented, I know the agent well, and he would surely be glad to have someone there to care for things. I'm sure the rent would be very little, and the place is so quaint

and old-fashioned, and we left it as neatly furnished as ever." She flicked away a tear. Her gratitude was plainly getting the better of her self-control.

"Then we'll run along. Just write us in care of that forwarding address, or, if I get a chance, I'll send you an addressed envelope," offered Patsy, casting Social Service rules further to the winds, and completely ignoring Bee's wild efforts to retrench. "Now we must run along. Good-bye, Rolly! Hope your kittie bleaches nicely, but I wouldn't hang her out on the line," with a mischievous twinkle. "I think she will know, herself, how to do her own laundering—cats always do. Good-bye, Mrs. Sherman, and we'll be anxious to hear about the sebatia cottage," she finished, following Bee's imperative lead.

And the charged silence that overwhelmed those two girls, heading directly to the Fremont Hotel, seemed like the last word in Social Service violations.

After all, the heart of a real girl is a wild little animal to train, isn't it?

CHAPTER IX

HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

"SEASIDE! Seaside!" chanted the trainman, and the Wayfarers drew deep breaths of anticipation. Plymouth, the historic town of America, was stretching out its green fields and its long trails of beach, just as faithful to its original plans and purposes as the most humble, even the most securely hidden, of any American coast town. Yet this is the one and only Plymouth!

"There's the harbor," called out Beatrice.

"And there's Captain's Hill," indicated Patsy, "the home of Miles Standish, you know. See the monument on its crest!"

The train had not yet fully stopped, and the girls were wide-eyed, eager to drink in every historic spot and landmark, and reverent in their awe of all the surrounding hallowed countryside. Every island out in the bay seemed marked as a

spot of Pilgrim significance, and every bluff stood out like a personal sentry, to watch and check the waves from desecrating onslaughts.

"That's Manomet Bluff," said Aunt Martha, peering out of her car window at the hills that form an artificial breakwater. "And that, I am sure, is Clark's Island."

"Where the Pilgrims spent their first Sabbath," suggested Eleanor, who had been devouring train-guides and train-boys' booklets.

"Which is Mayflower Channel?" asked Mabel innocently.

"It's buried in that bay somewhere, Mab dear," answered Patsy, "but you see they can't really fence in a channel."

"Oh," agreed Mabel, a bit crestfallen. Of course a channel was merely a deeper canal in the water—she should have remembered.

"But it's very important," Patsy condescended to explain, "because that channel is deep enough to allow vessels to come all the way up from the cape, sixteen miles farther down."

"Now who has been reading booklets?" joked Beatrice. "I suppose it's my turn to perform. But wait a bit, let us land. Here, Aunt Martha, I'll take your umbrella."

Tourists were descending upon the station, and

making the usual round of seemingly useless inquiries, while cabbies and taxi drivers offered all sorts of service, and many kinds of tours and pilgrimages through the colony.

"Let's walk up to the monument," suggested Beatrice, as her contribution to the intelligence symposium. "There's Court Street at the other end of this little park, and I know it is only a walk along Cushman Street, then north along Allerton, which will shortly bring the visitor to 'the National Monument of the Forefathers,'" she quoted literally.

"You might get a place on top of a bus, Bee, you do call off so nicely," remarked Patsy. "But I'm for a meal first. I feel I could not do justice to the Pilgrims while fasting. They had enough of that for all time. Let us go to that good-looking hotel over there and take a chance on real New England cooking. I hope it's beef tenderloin," she concluded lamely.

"Indeed, beef tenderloin!" scoffed Aunt Martha. "More likely the New England boiled dinner with turnips, cabbage, potatoes, corn-beef, salt pork——"

"Spare us!" moaned Beatrice. "We'll take the rest on suspicion, Auntie. But still it might all be palatable. I feel the tang of the sea air——"

"So much better than Boston," sniffed Mabel, "but I haven't noticed any style," she faltered. "Do you suppose these are all modern Priscillas?"

"The New York and Boston variety," whispered her sister, just as a gabbling group passed along. "Priscillas are only in the pageants these days, but we may see them at Provincetown if we get there. The big celebration for the Tercentenary is to be held there this summer, you know."

"We may," echoed Patsy, "but I have a feeling we won't," she whispered in Beatrice's ear. "I want to find Beth and Torry. The longer we are away the more I miss them. I haven't seen anyone yet to take their place in my heart," she lisped, with more sincerity than her frivolous manner betrayed.

"They were—nice," replied Bee, "and I'll help you find them, Pat. I did take to Torry quite considerable," she affected. "Now for that celebrated dinner. Pat, you may order for the Wayfarers," waved Beatrice grandly, shying a menu card in the direction of the girl in the creasless taffeta frock.

At it happened, a really palatable lunch was provided, although the *Macaroni a la Italia* rather frustrated the poetical aspiration of the

sightseers. But it was very good, and Patsy talked of Christopher Colombo, the son of an Italian wool-comber, getting to America first, which somewhat helped the macaroni.

"Are you sure, Auntie, you feel like looking around to-day?" Patsy asked solicitously, as they finished eating. "We can just as well go out to South Plymouth, our own headquarters. It is not far to run in here and——"

"No, really, dear. I feel like an excursion and I'm enjoying it. It's just like a Sunday-school picnic, to ride in, eat in a strange place, and actually go to see Plymouth Rock. I'll go along as far as you care to. I'm like Mabel—a little tired of the Boston restrictions."

"There!" exclaimed Nell. "Isn't Aunt Martha the best Wayfarer? She wants the wilds and thrills and adventures. I hope we run into something exciting. It's all very well to be nice and prim and Priscilline, but what about all our pretty clothes?"

"Now, Nellie, just wait until you get over at Manomet Hills," said Beatrice. "I believe there's a wonderful country club there. Who knows but you may meet a sportsman, and he may invite you out to shoot wild ducks? Keep your heart, Nell, the sport is yet to come."

As if in answer to that prediction a woman appeared at the dining-room door, and glanced wildly about among those at tables or preparing to leave. In the survey her eye caught the Carroll party, and without the slightest warning she called out:

"There it is! I see it! She's got it!" and the next moment the astonishing creature dashed down the aisle between the tables, and grabbed the piece of fox fur off Patsy's neck!

"I've got it," she called out to a man who followed her, although the announcement was entirely superfluous. Everyone in that room knew she had "got it."

Patsy was too surprised to utter a syllable. She wanted to laugh, but feared the woman might be irresponsible, and there flashed through her startled imagination the possibility of that creature grabbing a hat or so, next. Aunt Martha sank back in her chair pale and speechless, while the other girls were uncertain what should be done, and they stood staring at Patsy.

Presently a gentleman at the next table rose and stepped up to the Wayfarers.

"She has taken your fur?" he asked Patsy.

"Why, yes, what can she mean?" Patsy replied. The woman was standing at the desk hug-

ging the fox scarf and casting wild accusing glances over toward the astonished Wayfarers.

"She evidently thinks it is her own," replied the gentleman, "but I shall be glad to—help you. Are you guests here?" to Aunt Martha.

"No, we just came to Plymouth," Miss Carroll managed to explain.

"But she can't have my fur," declared Patsy indignantly, starting toward the desk. The shock had disarmed her at first, but Patsy's shocks were short lived.

"Be careful, dear," begged Aunt Martha, but Patsy scarcely heard, for she was now beside the desk with the strange gentleman at her elbow, and a curious crowd was encircling the queer woman.

"She took it! She took it!" the woman snapped. "I had it on my bag as they came in, and I'd know that fur in a shop full."

"You are mistaken," spoke Patsy in stinging tones. "That is my fur. I have worn in from New York City."

"Easy to say; easy to say," retorted the woman. "I just got it, Sam sent it from Boston, and I guess I know the fur my own husband sent me."

The gentleman who championed Patsy's cause extended his hand.

"Let me have that fur a moment, please," he asked quietly.

"Let you have it! Well, I guess not!" sang out the woman, every word climbing one note higher on her scale of scorn. Also her head wagged from side to side, and only the real baton was missing to complete the orchestral effect, as a leader's start for chorus.

But no one joined in. Instead the good-looking man supporting Patsy's case, leaned over and, without a word, took the fur from the woman's trembling hands.

Then he stepped back to separate himself from those crowding about.

"I'm Judge Davis of Boston," he said to the hotel clerk. "I guess we can settle this presently. You are——?" he asked Patsy.

"Patricia Carroll, of New York," said our abused little friend.

"And you?" to the woman who had seized the fur.

"None of your busines who I be," came the unpardonable retort.

"Oh, yes, it is, Madam," replied the judge. "And if you do not calm down soon, I shall be obliged to order your arrest for creating a disturbance."

This had the desired effect, and she, in feathers, ruffles, frizzes and hand-bags, replied in a rasping, nasal voice:

"I'm Mrs. Sam Hingham, and I live out Taunton way. Want t'know how many hens we keep?"

"No, I just want you to keep a civil tongue in your head, Madam. This tirade won't help your case any," declared Judge Davis.

" 'Tain't no tirade. It's a plain neck scarf. I'd been a-wantin' it——"

The judge was now behind one of the small round tables, and a keen observer might have seen him examining the scarf he held, although he did so very cautiously. He just allowed the piece to roll over one hand while he brushed it with the other.

"You claim you own this fur that I have seen you snatch from this young lady's neck?" asked Judge Davis in severe tones.

"Sartin, I owns it. Didn't my Sam——"

"Just answer the questions I ask, please," went on the judicious gentleman. Aunt Martha and the girls stood near Patsy, and even at the price of the lovely fox scarf "the show" seemed a bargain, according to the glances they exchanged.

"Gim'me that fur!" demanded the woman, los-

ing her temper again and forgetting the judge's warning. "What do you take me for? If my Sam was here——"

"Are there any identifying marks on this piece?" asked the inquisitor again.

Patsy was about to speak when he raised his hand in protest. The question was intended for Mrs. Sam.

"Marks on it?" she parried. "As if a woman could drawr a picture of them pretty hair lines! Why, I believe the animal thet—come from——"

"Then you don't know of any mark on it? Maker's name or other business mark?" The legal eye was levelled at the excited woman.

"I h'ain't never took time to look it over careful," she finally admitted, "but it seems to me there's a ribbon tag right 'cross the top o' the head. It has the Boston firm's name, of course," she finished triumphantly, in spite of the giggles and titters exuding about her!

"On the top of his head!" whispered Mabel.

"Poor foxie," added Nell. "Headache, I suppose."

The judge indulged in a smile of his own. He shook his head and turned to Patsy.

"Can you tell us how the fur is marked?" he asked kindly.

"Directly in the center of the fur there is a loose edge, under that is a tiny ribbon in which is woven the name 'Frigard—Furrier,'" said Patsy simply.

"I find that is correct," said Judge Davis with finality, "and this emergency court is adjourned." He smiled broadly and held the fur out toward Patsy. Then he turned to Mrs. Sam. "My good woman, you are running the risk of imprisonment when you undertake an outrage of this sort. You knew perfectly well the fur belonged to the young lady who was wearing it," he charged plainly. The woman tried to choke an answer, but it was all a choke.

There was a stir among the curious spectators, and a little round, red-faced man, was pushing his way through the crowd.

"What's this, what's this?" he twanged. "Sary, what ails yu? Raisin' a rumpus like this! Where'd yu ever git a piece of 'possum skin like that?" he demanded angrily.

"Sam, Sam!" spluttered the woman, grabbing the puffing individual by the coat sleeve (she had a great habit of grabbing things). "Take me home, Sam! These people is pesterin' me!"

"I'll take yu home all right," agreed Sam, far from amicably. "You'd ought'a stayed there, yu

and yur fixin's. Shame on yu to raise a rumpus like this!"

"But she found it, Sam. A girl seen her pick it up. Couldn't I j'est as well hev picked it up?" whimpered the woman.

"Jedge, she's gettin' queerer an' queerer. The idea of blamin' Sam Sparks fer buyin' cat skins! Much as I kin do to get rid of 'em. Then pretendin' yu found the thing! Kind-a mixed up, ain't it? Yu come along, Sary. Guess yu seen 'nough of this town. Wonder to me y'er wasn't locked up, outright," and his red face seemed fairly to ooze little pink beads of moisture, that he vainly tried to mop off with a still redder handkerchief.

"Poor man!" commiserated Aunt Martha. "Come away, girls, and don't add to his embarassment. What an awful woman!"

Judge Davis held his card in his hand. He now offered it to Miss Carroll.

"I'm glad I happened to stop in here," he remarked courteously. "I was called to Plymouth this morning on the celebration commission. If you should need any further assistance you will find my hotel marked on the card."

The Wayfarers, each and all, managed to utter some word of appropriate thanks, and Patsy as-

sured the judge the incident was entirely educational.

"We've learned a lot," she said simply. "And we only hoped to follow the historic catalogues."

"That sort of thing can hardly be classified," answered Judge Davis, "but it's all in a summer's day; and as you say, Miss Carroll, adds to one's general knowledge. I know a Mr. Robert Carroll——"

"That's daddy," interrupted Patsy, pardonably.

"I suspected you might be Bob Carroll's girl, with that head," continued the judge. "We used to call Bob 'Red' at college," and his eyes first lit up, then kindled gleefully. "Red and I were great chums. Give him my regards and tell him, if he comes down, to hunt me up. I'm still in business and he knows my Boston address," concluded Judge Davis, taking his leave with courtly courtesy.

"Red! My dad Red!" gasped Patsy. "I'm glad of it, now I have a joke on the major. Just fancy his lovely silver hair having been red—common red, like mine!"

"Your father is not an old man, my dear," Aunt Martha reminded her, with mild reproof in her tone. "But his hair turned gray—very

early. I think I have heard him mention Judge Davis of Boston," reflected Aunt Martha.

"Here, Bee," called Patsy, succumbing to one of her impulses. "Put this fur in your bag, please. I shouldn't want Sarry Sparks to waylay me again, and as to a tame, mild, stupid time, Mab, it seems to me Plymouth can be a riot even in a circumspect little hotel. Did anyone pay the checks? Don't make the mistake of escaping without fulfilling that formality. Here, Nell dear, you are the coolest looking, please hand this to the cashier."

And the excitement had so demoralized their plans, they were forced to seek out the South Plymouth boarding place without making the proposed pilgrimage to the Forefather's Monument.

"We must take a taxi," insisted Aunt Martha. "A woman like that might intercept us again."

"Intercept," repeated Bee. "I called that *pouncing* upon one. Only for Judge Davis she might have won out."

"But Sam seemed dependable," commented Patsy. "I'll bet Sam 'll box her ears if she doesn't behave on the way home. Look! There they go, in that carry-all. And just see her hands flying out in eloquence. What she isn't

saying about that 'red-headed gurrl,'" pondered Patsy, mischievously.

"But at any rate," put in Mabel, as they hailed a taxi, "it was lots of fun, and Judge Davis is almost as nice as our own daddy; isn't he, Nell?"

"Or almost as nice as Red Carroll," put in Patsy, with a gleam in her gray eyes that must have sent a message to cover the miles between herself and the aforementioned "Red."

Patsy hoped for a letter at least, and was sure to find one awaiting her, in their new headquarters.

CHAPTER X

A FLASH-BACK

MEANWHILE what of Beth and Torry?

In a small alcove, curtained off of an old-fashioned, long parlor, the main wing of the Blessington Private Sanitorium, out Chelsea way, a white cot held the slender form of Beth Brandon; while at her side, stroking the very white, inert hand that lay like a wafer on the coverlet, sat the faithful Torry.

For two weeks the girl had occupied that cot, and for two weeks the boy had occupied that chair, save when a heartless nurse would insist all visiting privileges be cancelled, and all visitors, even loving brothers, leave the patients' rooms.

Days and hours were too weary and sad to recall. Nights of nameless terrors there were, when the thought of "no Beth" would force it-

At her side...sat the faithful Torry.

self on Torry, or the thought of "maimed for life" would torture the girl whose brain was gradually awakening to the realities of things about her.

Miss Abbie was now "Aunt Abbie" to the Brandons, this term being adopted in recognition of the little lady's loving care and devoted attention with which she surrounded the sick girl, and gave, in part, to the anxious, unhappy brother.

For Beth Brandon had passed through those shadows sacred to the Borderlands, and only her young heart, and indomitable vitality, had rescued her from being led across by beckoning angels.

To-day the doctors had moved the shell-like casts, and to-day the good news of "success" had been given out.

So Torry sat now, defying the nurse, and Miss Abbie was behind the screen at the small dresser, with her dainty, white apron strings sticking out beyond the white panel, and nothing else but an occasional whisper betraying her presence.

"Torry," said the girl, oh, so faintly, "are you sure——"

"Sure, Sis darling! Can't you believe it?"

"But suppose I am not able to bear it, you know? Suppose it isn't true——"

He leaned his brown head over the little capped-head on the flat pillow, and pressed his lips gently on that smooth brow. "Sis," he whispered, "I am just kept from shouting by the fear of shocking you. It is—so true, so gloriously true, that I don't know how to believe it all myself!"

The closed eyelids opened, and the big dark eyes awakened to the joy beaming down from Torry's face. "It is *so* good, Brother," she whispered, pressing his willing hands, "to think I will walk with you again——"

"And dance and skate and hike! Why, Sis, I feel like a kid! Wouldn't wonder but what Aunt Abbie will have trouble getting me to bed to-night. It is so unbelievedly wonderful!"

"Aunt Abbie is going to start right in now," said a voice behind the screen, and incidentally, behind the apron strings. "Torry boy, come along home and let the child sleep," and she came out into the light in her immaculate, white dimity dress, apron just a patch for neatness, and the little summer hat actually girlish with its black velvet band and spray of white lilac. It was a small panama hat, and Beth always loved to have Aunt Abbie wear it.

Torry rose reluctantly, and sighed rather defiantly.

"I suppose a fellow has to mind, Beth, but I just feel that I could sit here and look at you forever, I can see you now, as you were two years ago; Beth Brandon, the happiest, liveliest and, yes, the prettiest girl of all——"

"What about Patsy?" came a very small voice from the pillow; and Torry gave in to a real boy's laugh.

"Patsy's a peach, pardon slang, Auntie, but there is no synonym for peach, and Patsy's that! That reminds me, Sis——"

"I know," interrupted Aunt Abbie. "You have not yet written to those girls, Torry Brandon!"

"Oh, haven't you, Torry?" asked his sister.

"No, but there's a reason. I've been waiting for the big news. Now I've got it, I'll write straight off."

"Come," prompted the nurse, and Torry gave his sister another kiss. Then he patted the coverlet, went over to the dresser and patted the flowers, patted Aunt Abbie's shoulders and only stopped at the white fortress that inclosed the private nurse—the linen and the duck and, possibly, the nainsook in the cap. Torry decided he

would not attempt any more personal patting on that arctic display, so he meekly followed Aunt Abbie out into the lonely corridor.

There he tucked the small arm under his own coat sleeve and they bravely started off.

"Some girl," he said irrelevantly, but Miss Abbie knew he referred to his sister.

"Yes, a plucky little woman. A few days more, boy, and we'll have her back home with us," assured Miss Abbie.

"Won't that be great? Ginger! Aunt Abbie, what would we have done but for you, in all this?"

"All right, I guess, dear. But bless that runaway flivver, if you like. She introduced us. Nurse says the doctors are simply delighted," with sudden reversion to the important topic. "It seems there was a kink in the nerve. They feared, first, it might be dead."

"I always said that doc would fix her up, and now he's done it," declared Torry. "Aunt Abbie, I'm so happy, to-night, I don't want to think of grandfather's mistakes. But he wanted so much to see Beth cured, and to think we can't get the money we need from that fool will!"

"Hush, dear. That's bound to come right some time. And you've promised me you are not going to worry about money while there's a check

left in my new book," she laughed lightly at the time-honored joke. "Besides, I have longed, all my life, to have a girl I could care for——"

"And a boy?"

"Yes, a boy, too," with an affectionate squeeze of the convenient arm. "And now I feel I have something worth while to think about, when I draw my curtains at nightfall."

"You surely ought to have. They must be visions—real visions—of Beth——" he stopped suddenly, and they walked along in silence. Torry had been drawing on his nerve force, and now felt the supply running down. Miss Abbie took the cue and did not interrupt his soliloquy.

At the confectioner's near the home corner, Aunt Abbie stopped to make some purchases and Torry insisted on getting ice cream.

"I wish Sis could have some," he murmured. "She does so like ice cream——"

"She can in a day or two; and think how convenient this will be when we get her home," mused Miss Abbie. "Of course, that's a nice enough sanitarium, but a hospital is a hospital, and I don't see how the nurses stand them. And such pretty nurses, too."

It was two hours later, when dinner had been cleared away, that Torry undertook to write the

news to Patsy. As a rule, Torrington Brandon was rather a deliberate chap who made up his mind, then promptly executed that make up, but just now he was destroying sheet after sheet of Beth's best stationery, and although he admitted he had really big news to tell, somehow he was making rather a fluke of the telling.

"Self-conscious," he almost hissed at himself, "and just because the letter is to a girl. Come to, old fellow," he prodded, "this is to be Beth's letter, just *proxied.*"

With that realization, he managed to get Patsy's name on the paper to his satisfaction; also he jumped right in to say his sister was "getting along wonderfully" and her "prospects were bright beyond expectations." These seemed like words lacking in energy, especially as "prospects" rather clashed with "expectations," but admitting that these girl letters were a nuisance, and that a fellow couldn't very well say things simply (why, we wonder?), Torry ran along a few non-commital lines, and succeeded very well in hiding his real meaning. This was not his intention, but self-consciousness is the one gigantic barrier to self-expression, and Torry had a very acute case of that style of masonry in his cast.

He mentioned the old homestead, but said he

felt now it would be best to take his sister down to the Cape immediately, if her physicians would give permission, as even the memories at the old place might do violence to her tender mental condition. "So we have left the house entirely to the agents," he wrote, "and I suppose it is rented to some ambitious boarding-house shark by now." Torry sighed as he wrote this.

The call of the old homestead had been urgent, and he wanted to get out there and see how things looked. He wanted to have the estate fixed up attractively for a market that must have place for such a desirable piece of property, and perhaps, more than anything else, he wanted to be a boy again, for just a brief vacation in the scenes so dear to him since his own happy childhood! He sighed as he turned away from the lines written to Patsy.

"Too bad those girls couldn't get the place," he murmured. "I feel I could sell it quickly enough, if some real humans undertook to live there for a few weeks. But what's the use of whining? Nothing so spoils a place as abandonment," he concluded logically.

Behind all this was a cause working. College next fall loomed up large and attractive, but Torry had spent his money for Beth's operation!

"If I never put my head inside of a college again," he reflected, "that part is beyond argument. To think that Sis is to be well! Gee whiz! Say, boy," he shook himself, "how about that girl letter?"

A happy thought rewarded his perserverance.

"Aunt Abbie," he called to the next room. "Any message for our friends, the Carrolls? You know I've told you about them, and how much you are like their little auntie. It would be great if we could all come together, somehow, during the summer."

"But, my dear boy!" said Aunt Abbie, unfolding and then donning the dainty little apron she had carried to the hospital with her (Aunt Abbie couldn't think clearly outside an apron). "You know, Sister must be kept very quiet, and even joy is exciting. Wait till we see how she gets along. For the first two weeks at least, we will let her listen to nothing but the birds, the sea and our own loving voices. I have heard, to-day, that I can have my friend's cottage, and with my own maid, Susan, we will be quite comfortable for a while." Beth's maid, Selma, had been temporarily dismissed. "Send this address," handing him a slip of paper, "and extend my regards as your auntie," she smiled. "I am sure I shall be

delighted to meet Miss Carroll, as soon as Beth is strong enough to stand wholesome excitement."

"Oh, I see," agreed Torry, scratching away to add the forwarding address to Patsy's letter. "She has to be on liquid diet for body and mind for a while. That's all right, Auntie, you're the boss, and I'm glad to oblige. I told the girls" (with a superfluous show of indifference) "the old house was probably rented, and that we couldn't go out there until towards Fall, if at all. Now, if you will tell me where your letters are, I'll go out to the station, and post them all, then I'll 'phone to see how Beth is resting before that indomitable gong strikes nine. Where's Zip?"

"Waiting for you, and thumping every wisp of fur off his poor, little, impatient tail. Here, Zippy! He will be so glad of a run! I had to leave him in his little yard this whole afternoon, for people will persist in forgetting to close the front gate, and we don't want Zippy starting off alone to find Beth. He does seem to miss her so!"

But if he did miss the girl taken away from him, and hidden behind the big doors of the Blessington Sanitarium, the frisky little Zippy forgot to mention the fact when Torry allowed him to caper on ahead, down through the boxwood-edged

path to the arched front gate, and then out along the quiet, surburban roadway to the post-office sub-station.

Torry told the little animal there was "big news of the best kind," and that may have accounted for his frantically wild delight.

If there is anything happier than a happy little dog, it must be a happy big dog, and that only because he has more room to be happy in!

So Torry finally mailed the letter to Patsy.

And Zippy barked approval.

CHAPTER XI

PATSY AND THE HAWK

IN due time the letter was received. The postmark, and the unmistakable boyish-hand inscription, sent a ripple of excitement through the entire group of Wayfarers, who were seated on the big, wide, vine-clambered porch of their South Plymouth boarding house, there awaiting the day's biggest event: the arrival of the postman.

Patsy slipped the letter behind a number of others—keeping the best for the last—but all eyes were upon her, and Nell, ignoring the usual propriety of guests in the rocking chair brigade, edged over and attempted to secure the prize.

"Oh, no, lady!" cautioned Patsy. "That's mine!"

"But it's from Boston, and from Beth, of course. Do hurry and pass it around," pleaded Nell.

"Maybe," parried the other. "But I always like a personal reading first," slipping the letter in at her belt. "Here are cards from the girls; there's a lovely letter from Gene—she's going to Bar Harbor, and here's one you may all devour: an invitation to join a party for the Berkshires," and Patsy passed along the bulk of the mail.

"As if we cared for any of *that,*" scoffed Bee. "Read your letter, Pat, *the* letter, and pass that along. We are not so easily side-tracked as all that."

Patsy jumped up and sprang off the porch, ignoring the near-by steps. Nell raced after her, while Bee and Mab joined in the chase. Through the bushes they ducked and dodged, down over the sloping hill that fell in a patch of a pond, bordering the two old estates. Patsy slipped like a water-creature into a canoe that lay near the edge and pushed out, paddling with her hands to a distance of safety.

She waved the letter triumphantly over her head with a free hand, while the little skiff caressed the tiny ripples responding to Patsy's trailing fingers. Her companions stood on the bank calling all sorts of threats to the truant Wayfarer, and only the demands of a flock of "boarding house ducks," that made for the bank,

expecting a meal of purloined crumbs, seemed to prevent Nell from slipping off pumps and socks, and indecorously wading out to the drifting canoe.

It was one of those perfect summer days, when the pure blue sky promised a fresh west wind, and the little cloud-ships sailed away out across the bay in fleets and squadrons, heading straight past the Gurnet, where, on that memorable day, December 26, 1620, the Forefathers first touched, in their exploration of the land of the Red Men. Somehow, even the elements seem to reverence Cape Cod Bay as the cradle of the famous Plymouth Rock, and as Patsy so happily pushed the insignificant, home-made canoe through its narrow path in the brook, that lay like a tiny basin of rainfall in the deep green meadow of South Plymouth, she was reminded of the days when other girls pushed their barks out in deeper streams, to bring back to the early colonists supplies of fish from the water, or corn from the fields of the Red Men. Earliest American history, even the record of the Mayflower itself, is very clear on this point. According to official documents: "The original exploring party having landed from the rock, marched also into land and found divers corn fields and little running

brooks, a place very good for situation. So we returned to our ship again with good news to the rest of the people, which did much comfort their hearts."

Patsy wondered if the other girls recalled this historical paragraph, for, trivial as the connection was, at that moment she felt the spirit of all Priscillas breathing their inspirational influence about her.

Out in the center of the humble pond a sturdy rock stood monumental, and being still in the Pilgrim mood, this modern Wayfarer "landed" upon it.

There she sat safely triumphant, her little bark obeying the rope she held it by, her lithe form nestling comfortably in the grooved seat of the generous rock, while from the shore her companions begged even the ducks to "go get Patsy."

"I'm going to read the letter now!" she shouted across, impishly. "If you're good, and it has good news, I'll bring it back—after a while."

"All right for you!" called over Mab in a threatening tone that belied the words. "We hope your boat drifts away and leaves you stranded."

"I could walk back," retorted the girl on the rock, "but it's lovely out here."

"So it is," agreed Beatrice to those on shore. "It seems to me Massachusetts abounds in pond-farms—they must have planted them long ago, there's such fine, puddly crops all over."

"Ponds and golf links," said Nell. "Do you suppose the Pilgrims played the big game, or did the links spring up since their time?"

"Eleanor Perry! How dare you joke about the Pilgrims!" charged her sister Mabel. "Well for you our worthy boarding house mistress doesn't hear you, or you would be set to reading, all over again, those weighty volumes of the Bradford History she wished upon us last evening. But just look at Patsy devouring that helpless letter! It's from Torry, of course. What a pity we couldn't have wrung it from her! I should have enjoyed nothing better than obliging the pompous Patsy to sit up and beg for the news. Now she makes us sit *down* and wait for it," and Mab dropped to a velvet spot in the meadow, where the little pink blooms and blue forget-me-nots hid in the tall, silky grass.

New York maids or New England maid! Where was the fundamental difference just then?

"But Pat is always a good sport," quoth Bee. "She'll flop into that canoe and paddle back presently."

Smiling at the absurdity of the situation, the girls settled down to wait, when, suddenly, they noticed a big black bird circling round over Patsy's head.

"Oh, look!" shouted Nell. "Is that a hawk? It's going to swoop down on——"

But before the sentence was completed a shriek of terror echoed across the water, and the bird had opened wider his wings, spread his great claws and swooped down upon the unknowing Patsy!

She threw up her hands to beat the thing off wildly, but not before the talons had fastened themselves in her abundant hair, and her scream of pain terrified the girls standing helpless on the opposite shore.

"How can we reach her?" cried Nell, but Beatrice did not wait to answer. She started out first to walk, then to wade, and finally, getting into water sufficiently deep, she struck out to swim to the rock only a few rods away, but now, seemingly, as distant as safety itself for the stricken girl.

Another scream, and the great, vicious bird flew upward again, while Patsy, all but collapsed, rolled off the slant rock into the water.

A few more strokes and Bee was beside her.

"Pat, dear, are you hurt?" she gasped, her head well out of the water and her arms now almost upon the swaying canoe.

"Oh, my head!" moaned Patsy. "I feel scalped!"

"Take hold of me, and get back to the rock," ordered Beatrice, for at this point the water channelled and was dangerously deep. Patsy took the extended hand and again clambered up the slippery rock. That both were drenched was no matter of consideration, but when Beatrice saw tiny drops of blood trickle down Patsy's white face she was terrified, indeed.

"You poor child!" she murmured, throwing a dripping arm around her. "What an awful thing! That savage bird!"

"Yes, and I never even heard it coming," faltered Patsy. "I was so absorbed in the letter. Have I still got it?" feeling in her sagging belt.

"Oh, don't bother about it, dear. See if we can get in the canoe, and I'll paddle over. I'm afraid your head is hurt."

"Only scratched, but don't tell Aunt Martha. It won't be anything, I'm sure," she was brushing away the tell-tale marks that left ugly red streaks over her frightened face. "Who would ever think a bird would come down like that?"

"It must get food here, see those crusts and corn husks? I suppose the creature saw the white flutter of your paper, and came down for food," Bee reasoned.

"But are they usually so sagacious? However," and Patsy sighed through a broken smile, "he's gone now, and I hope I have a few hairs left. Really, Bee, I just felt as if he lifted the scalp clear off my poor red head."

"It's still on, thank goodness!" breathed Beatrice. "But I must say you did have a narrow escape. Are you sure you are not cut—deep?"

"No," and Patsy felt gently through the tangled wet hair, "I'm not cut at all, I'm sure. But see the poor girls frightened to death over there! Shout to them I'm all right. I'm afraid the old hawk would come back if I defied him openly."

Beatrice knew it was not dread of the hawk that controlled Patsy's voice, but she called a reassurance over to the girls, who seemed likely to follow her own example, and swim out to the rock, if those marooned upon it did not soon return.

Skilfully both Beatrice and Patsy plied their hands through the water to paddle in again, and after all were assured that the bird had done no

greater damage than scratching Patsy's hands, and tearing her hair cruelly with his sudden attack, the next difficulty was that of luring Aunt Martha off somewhere while the two drenched girls got into dry clothing.

Fortunately that part of the grounds was deserted in the early morning, and during all the excitement none but the stupid ducks witnessed the Wayfarers' distress. The pond was some distance from the old homestead, now converted into a profitable lodge or boarding house, and not even the small boy, usually so unavoidable, happened along during the encounter.

It was finally agreed that Mabel should go up to the house and see if the coast was clear, and if Aunt Martha was safely engaged for at least fifteen minutes. Then Mabel was to give the signal: three trills, and the other girls would dash up the path, run in the back door and get to their bathroom, where Mabel was to have gowns ready, while Eleanor then made away with the damaging evidence of the encounter.

"We will have to be pretty lively to get over all those bright rugs without leaving a trail," said Bee. "Are you sure, Pat, your head won't throb in hurrying?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, perfectly," Patsy assured her. "All I'm

worrying about now, is Aunt Martha. She would vision blood-poison, or bird-rabies, if she ever knew. I'm so glad the scratch is hidden in my hair. Are you sure there is no more blood anywhere?"

"Not a trace; and you're lucky, Pat."

"You have a queer idea of luck. First my neck-piece snatched by crabbed old Sary Sparks, and next my head-piece is seized by some sort of chicken hawk. Great luck, if you don't care what you say! Listen! The coast is clear. Let's run," and run they did, clear up to the back steps that led to the servants' porch over the kitchen entrance to the long, rambling house.

Comfort, the cook, was just outside taking a rock in her big chair, between breakfast and lunch, and she tried to halt them, but with a "tumbled in the pond" from Bee, and a hearty laugh from Comfort, who managed to exclaim that "water was good fer ducks and summer boarders," they escaped to the room where Mab was waiting with the bath robes.

"Aunt Martha is exchanging recipes with the lady from Falmouth," explained the agitated Mabel, "and they were safe on lemon pie when I came up."

"Plenty of time, then," panted Patsy. "See,

Bee, it's my hand that's scratched. That's where the blood came from." She displayed an ugly scratch across her knuckles, from which a pinkish fluid now comingled with water, as she tried to divest herself of her wet garments.

"Better still," replied Bee cheerfully. "I'll fix up all the scratches quickly, as we are safe from detection. Run along, Mab, and get the iodine. It isn't pretty, but it's sure."

"Say, girls," said Patsy contritely, "there's that letter. It's wet, but the lines, what there are, may be deciphered. I'm awfully sorry I plagued you, but the news is worth the whole experience. Just read it——"

Eleanor, who was neither wet nor waiting on the victims, read it aloud, every word. And if Torry Brandon could have viewed the scene even letter-writing to girls would have been justified for him.

"Cheers!" almost shouted Eleanor.

"Don't you dare!" warned Patsy. "This is my party, and I don't intend to spoil it. Come along and dress for lunch. No need for a bath in the bay this morning."

"But can you imagine Beth able to walk?" gasped the excited Eleanor, almost caressing the fateful bit of paper.

"Somehow I never could imagine that she couldn't walk," answered Patsy. "But what annoys me is they haven't asked us to come see her."

"Oh, a boy!" argued Bee. "He wouldn't ask us unless someone dictated. But just trust the Wayfarers to get around a little difficulty like that. Hark! There's the auntie! Skip, girls, and do be doing something sensible!"

"My hair is the most useful alibi of my entire existence," whispered Patsy, seizing a brush, but stroking very gently at the tangled mass.

Not a moment too soon, for the lemon recipes had evidently been exhausted as a medium of confidential exchange, and Miss Carroll was all ready for Torry's big news.

If Beth Brandon had been a much more intimate friend of the group than she was, her recovery could not possibly have caused keener joy.

But, after all, what is greater than the boon of recovered strength to a young girl? The miracle, indeed, when she who is helpless is made to walk again.

"Torry's a brick!" announced Patsy, accepting again the crumpled sheet. And no one objected to the trite compliment.

CHAPTER XII

GLORIOUS PLYMOUTH ROCK

"I DON'T see why you should be so disappointed, Patsy," said Eleanor next morning, as they prepared for a trip to the real Plymouth Rock, "you may hear from Rolly's mother, and even if we don't get an old homestead for a camp, there are endless chances of good times in New England."

"I know all that, Nellie," replied Patsy, "but I wanted so much this year to give Aunt Martha a rest of her own kind. She has been racing all over the country with us for summers past, and I planned this year to give her a little return for all that exhausting anxiety. You see, Auntie is like my real mother, Nell, and you wouldn't want your mother to wear herself out that way. Besides, Nellie, I made all the plans for the first time this year, Dad always arranged before, but I wanted to manage this, and I don't want to make a fizzle of it."

"Well, I wouldn't worry about it, Pat, you always come out all right——"

"But I must always go along right. There is no such thing as bagging the pet god of good-luck, unless you set a trap for him."

"Did Torry say the place was positively rented?"

"Yes, there's the relic letter. I think we ought to frame it. Maybe the gay bird—the hawk, I mean—belongs to the historical ornithological society, and was out collecting documents when he came down on me."

Eleanor picked up from the old colonial dresser the water-stained paper, and read the message concerning the homestead. She looked up as she finished.

"To be frank, Pat, I'm rather glad, although of course, I am sorry if you are disappointed," she appended with a girl's delightful indifference for logic. "You know Beth and Torry hinted of weird things about the old place, and land knows, we had enough of spooks down South!" (Eleanor referred to the story told in "Patsy Carroll Under Southern Skies.")

"But we had a wonderful time trapping the old ghost——"

"Patricia Carroll! I do believe you enjoy hunting ghosts!"

"There's poorer sport. Besides, haven't you complained about New England being tame? The historic stuff is valuable, of course, and I love it, but I insist on something more exciting on our programme."

Eleanor broke into a merry laugh and threw her arms around Patsy.

"You duck!" she exclaimed. "I see your scheme, now. You actually want a ghost installed in our camp, and I know perfectly well you'll get one. All right, dear, you may have one, and you can depend upon me to help entertain him. I hope it's a male; we had the female of the species last time."

Mabel and Beatrice had been out to the village notion store and were just returning. Aunt Martha was ready for the trip to the rock, and now utilized her spare moments writing letters in the little alcove, off the big parlor on the first floor.

"Sure your head is all right?" inquired Bee solicitously, seeing Patsy place her lightest hat rather gingerly on the coiled, auburn hair.

"Perfectly. In fact, I think the hawk must be in the scalp treatment business, and was looking

for customers. But I did make a mistake in not wearing a hat. My hair is such a signal light."

"Here are the bathing caps," offered Mabel. "That's what we'd all better wear when we go out on rocks in old colony ponds. Ugh! I just shudder every time I think of that bird! Pat, honestly, I expected to see you soaring up and sailing away to some wild nest in the ocean's rocky turrets. What's the name of the bird that nestles in ocean rocks?"

"Not chicken hawks, at any rate," replied Bee crisply.

"That wasn't a chicken hawk, either. I asked the gardener and he said it was a hen hawk."

"Same variety," laughed Bee, "only the gardener is New English and we are New Yorkish."

"But you didn't tell him the bird tried to scalp me?" exclaimed Patsy, apprehensively.

"Nary a word about that. Just asked what sort of birds fly around the big gray rock. He assured me summer boarders did fool things, even to stealing cake from the table to put out on the rock for squawking hen hawks. Of course, Hawky thought you belong to his band of table-boarder robbers, Pat. I'm ready," picking up her bag, "but I think we ought to go to the souvenir store and see if we could buy a rabbit's foot

for luck before we start out. They say things happen in threes, and Pat has had two——"

"The third must be a surprise in joy, not in disaster," foretold Bee. "Pat has had enough trouble to appease the wrath of any old jinx. But, listen a moment, Pat," she nudged her companion as they reached the first stair landing. "What about the August camp? Where do we go from here?"

"Nell and I have just been talking that over. We've got to give up the Brandon place, of course, but I have hopes Rolly's mother will find the one she spoke of. Dad warned me against the lure of agents, that's why I am trying the personal touch; like your Social Service, Bee. I'm afraid I rather disgraced the profession; didn't I?"

"No, you didn't, little girl. Even standards admit of some variation, else they would be obstructions. What splendid weather we are having! I suppose fog will be due just about time for the big pageant."

"Hope not. Coming, Aunt Martha; and we are just on time; may I remind you?" giving an affectionate little pressure for Miss Carroll's arm, and joining her at the front door.

Then the Wayfarers were ready for the most

important of all sight-seeing in New England—a view of Plymouth Rock. There are many points of interest, monuments of noble deed and heroic service, and natural scenic beauties scattered all over the old colonial settlements, but Plymouth Rock is the high altar of reverence, the landmark world-famous, but most dear to the heart of every intelligent American—intelligent to the extent of knowing what that Rock stands for.

A feeling of awe and impersonal concentration possessed each girl, and Miss Carroll, as they started off from their rendezvous in South Plymouth. Once Mabel, who more than the others seemed bent on the personal enjoyment of every hour, ventured to inject that element by suggesting they vary the sight-seeing with some modern motion pictures that afternoon, but she was checked, rather decisively, by her sister Eleanor, who declared no such commonplace diversion should spoil the day's historic pilgrimage.

Going through Court Street to North, where the name of the thoroughfare changes to Main Street, the Wayfarers found themselves facing the hill where, among the fine old mansions of Winslow Street, is that of Edward Winslow, brother to General John Winslow. It was built

by Edward in 1754 and is still a magnificent structure. The frame was brought from England, and as it stands to-day no more imposing type of New England home may be found throughout the early settlements. Two noble linden trees arch the entrance to the grounds, and these were planted by Edward Winslow's daughter, in 1760.

Patsy had her guide book in hand as they went along.

"I intend," she announced, "to write a story on all this for our school paper *Tellit,* and I want to make sure the books of description match up with my memory impressions."

"Just let me glimpse this page," asked Eleanor. "I have read about the New England family trees, the real trees planted in front of the houses on either side of the gate-way, by the bride and groom. I want to see if these are mentioned for the Winslow mansion." It was then the above data giving credit for the trees to "the Winslow daughter" was quoted.

"Now we can almost see the Rock," said Aunt Martha rather gravely. They were descending Cole's Hill toward the harbor.

"Somehow I feel rather funereal," commented temperamental Nellie, with a sigh.

"That's awe," explained Patsy. "A-W-E," she spelled out. "Lovely, neat little word not to be confused with a groan. The other is a breathing exercise, spelled A-H! There! I see the Rock! I spied it first. See the granite canopy?"

"But that's not a natural sea-hewn rock," objected Mab, just a bit disappointed, as the artistic granite canopy that now sheltered the Rock, loomed in sight at the foot of the hill.

"Have patience, girlie," cautioned Bee. "The real rock is beneath that structure. Haven't you seen any guide at all?"

"Oh, yes; I remember now," confessed the worldly Mab. "But there are so many monuments, I thought that was just one of them."

"It is, the One of all," added Patsy, while Aunt Martha drew a deep, reverential breath, for now, indeed, they stepped upon hallowed ground—the resting place of Plymouth Rock.

Beneath this granite canopy, which is supported by four columns, is seen the boulder, which just three hundred years ago welcomed that band of pilgrims, who after resting for the Sabbath (the day before) on Clark's Island, turned their shallop shoreward, and found there this great oval rock, flat at top, and just near enough shore to

afford them a safe spring, dry shod, to the land they had chosen to settle upon.

All about them there were wilds and unknown dangers, but, steering their queer sailboat of the type called "shallop" up to the welcoming rock, they gratefully set foot upon its peculiarly convenient surface, and when the "ten principal men" had each made himself safe upon this boulder, and no doubt raised prayerful eyes to heaven for the privilege, the Landing of the Forefathers was complete. All this was fresh in the minds of the Wayfarers as they gazed in wonder at the immortal monument. Guides about offered information, but Patsy smiled them off with a flare of her reliable little brown book of references.

"Sit down here, girls," she directed, "and let us refresh our memory. I know this rock has had more journeys than the body, or relics, of Columbus, and I believe they are planning to move it again. Let's see when it was all put together up here." They seated themselves on the coping near the tall iron fence that now protects the rock.

"They couldn't land here?" objected the doubting Mabel, "for the Rock is some little distance from the water."

"They didn't," agreed Patsy. "Here is what

I'm looking for." She turned a page or two and read:

"The upper portion of the renowned boulder, nearly all of which is now in sight, was, for one hundred and six years, separated from the original Rock, and during all this long period, occupied localities remote from the landing place."

Patsy turned to the Rock and pointed out the cemented crack.

"There, you see," she said, "that's where the top was put on."

"But how did it get off?" This from Eleanor.

"Nell, you're too literal," laughed Patsy. "I thought we might leave some of this for a more convenient survey, but, since you insist—Let me see, yes, here you are." Again she quoted:

"In 1744, during the series of events leading to the Revolution, an attempt to raise the Rock for transportation to the Town Square disclosed the fact that the upper portion had become separated from the lower, probably through action of the frost. It was taken to the Square, where it was deposited at the foot of a liberty pole, from which waved a flag bearing the motto:

" 'Liberty or Death.' "

Patsy paused for dramatic effect. Aunt

Martha was returning from her solitary expedition around the big canopy.

"There's a lot more wonderful information," said Patsy, "but we can't drink it all in here. We have much more to see. Just let us take one more soul-filling view of that stone, then shut our eyes on it and seal it up in our memory, like a film that must be kept from the light. Later I am going to make sure of a few more paragraphs in this history, taken from Bradford's, you know, girls. But just now let us be content with the Rock. Dear, old, glorious stepping-stone to religious liberty!" she breathed. "How wonderful to have you here, to tell us the great story in your unchiseled silence!"

"Rather good, Pat," commented Bee, approvingly, "for the unchiseled silence surely tells a mute story. There, you see, we are a bit leeward, but we mean well, and that's the main thing."

So they left the Rock, reading as they went:

"The Rock was originally a solid boulder of about seven tons, and of glacial deposit. It is greenish syenite, very hard, and takes a high polish when fragments are worked."

"And we couldn't have a souvenir," bemoaned the ever-literal, positive and personal Eleanor.

The Wayfarers merely shook their heads.

"Are they really going to move it again?" asked Nell.

"So the celebration plans say," replied Patsy.

"Then I'll leave room for an insert in my diary," commented Nell.

"I believe the Colonial Dames are to provide a new canopy," Bee told them.

"Yes, I saw that announced. And also that the rock is to be placed partly in the water," concluded Patsy.

CHAPTER XIII

CROSSED WIRES

BY some strange, subtle influence, perhaps most reasonably accounted for by admitting that true affection is something of the soul, and springs to life like faith itself, the untold dangers that hung over the innocent head of Beth Brandon, now seemed to be signalling Patsy and her friends.

First Aunt Martha sensed it, and openly commented on "the risk that boy was taking in seeking surgical aid for the sister without mature guidance." Then Patsy, impulsive and daringly sympathetic, seized upon the plan of getting the old homestead as a camp—she felt that the necessary property adjustment which the two Brandons so coveted would then be arranged. In fact, she was secretly planning to arrange it, when, without reasonable explanation,

the old place was swept from her list of available rentals.

Not even the delightful little Rolly, whose mother was enthusiastically promising by letter something equally attractive, offered real satisfaction in the substitute. Some old friend, a former employer, left an estate, and Rolly's mother was to write the agent about it and, if satisfactory, she would go to the country home with the Wayfarers. But through all this a smouldering streak of disappointment marred the programme of summer days, and now that the girl Beth was to be able to walk, and perhaps could in some way take part in their pleasures, Patsy all but openly resented their separation.

She wanted to use her girlish skill in helping the newly-found friends adjust their difficulties. It was Patsy's prerogative to work out mysterious problems. Last summer the enchanting months spent in California (Patsy Carroll in the Golden West), were repleat with such adventures as always crowded the heels of the Wayfarers. The untangling then of the mystery surrounding the lost "movie baby," the Pearl of the Pacific, had kept the group alert with thrilling action all through their vacation, and now in New England, where the Tercentenary was unfolding the

emblazoned pages of American history, this girl felt the call of Priscilla, the Puritan maid of sturdy, heroic mold, who fought nature itself to help establish these self-same little homes, with their territorial lines and limits.

And it was a homestead claim that now threatened the happiness of the two friends she had coincidentally met, in the very first lap of her New England journey!

Neither the joking of her companions, nor the possibility of unwarranted interference on her part, would intimidate the valiant Patsy.

"Did you answer Torry Brandon's letter, Pat?" asked Bee out of a clear sky, when a trolley ride to the seaside was being arranged for the evening.

"Whatever made you think of that now?" asked Patsy, smiling into the ever dependable eyes of this prudent Beatrice Forbes.

"Some little string keeps tugging in their direction," Bee admitted. "For romance sake we might attribute it to an interest in a very handsome boy, but you and I know better. It was not hard to read distress behind his brave smile, nor to interpret its effect on the pathetic Beth. There," she finished flushing a little, "I rarely go so strong, do I, dear? Must be something pow-

erful, indeed, to give me such eloquence." She donned her prettiest, jade-green sweater, and tucked her arm in Patsy's, following Aunt Martha and the Perry girls out the drive to the trolley line at a near-by corner.

"I know I'm very silly," confessed Patsy, "but I feel as if something is going to happen. There! I've broken my resolution. I determined to pay no attention to such foolish superstition, but you know, Bee, I told Cyrus, the gardener, that a hawk flew down to get something from my hand, and he declared the hawk was warning me of a friend's danger!" Patsy laughed lightly, and quickened her steps, for the others were already hailing a car.

"It wasn't the hawk, or even Cyrus's words, Patsy. It's your natural feeling of interest in the Brandons. Glad I'm not alone in my morbid imaginings—misery still loves her old friend company, you see," finished Bee.

The car was quickly filled with summer folks bound for an open air performance in a little park, developed as a private enterprise, and considered one of the attractions of the beach front. It was but a short run, but the early nightfall clothed the hills and cliffs with soft, hazy shadows, and the full beauty of a Massachusetts eve-

ning along its rock-pillared coast, gave the hour a delightful sanctuary—like an isolated spot on Time's broad and variable panorama.

Perhaps never before had so many visitors come to the Plymouths. The Tercentenary celebration at Provincetown, and the expected winter celebration at Plymouth proper, had stirred up national interest, and the wave of social prosperity, following the close of the world's war, added possibility to zest, until Americans from many quarters descended upon the historic territory.

It was this same loyalty of spirit that brought the Wayfarers thence, and to-night, out against a big rock, where a few trees defied the saline earth's poisons for their roots, a little play was staged under the sky, in an ingeniously-constructed open air theatre.

There was a rush for seats as the car stopped.

"You girls go along and save a place for me," directed Aunt Martha. "Don't get too far down near the Rock. It might be damp there."

Mabel stayed with Miss Carroll, while the others attempted to follow the orders to get seats.

"Here we are," announced Eleanor, reaching a row unfilled, "all four together." She asserted

a personal claim by trying to hold the seats until the others should reach them. Patsy and Bee waited a few moments in front of the popular benches, and presently all were comfortably seated.

"Isn't this lovely?" softly whispered Aunt Martha.

The actors in their rocky rendezvous were making ready. Lights were flickering up, here and there, and on the big canvas screen, preliminary flashes in the way of local advertisements were being thrown, for the entertainment of the visitors.

In the seats directly in front of the Wayfarers was a group of girls, evidently from Boston. They chatted freely of the vacation opportunities, some praising, others discounting the published attractions, but all seemingly content to "stay out the time" allowed them as vacation from their business in the big Hub city.

"We're going to Provincetown," said one, whose face was hidden in the darkness. "Bell and I are going to help with some private decorating."

Patsy nudged Bee. "That sounds like—the girl in the Boston store, the one who sold the men's hose," Patsy whispered, referring to the

girl whose conversation about "Torry" and his sister had caught the ears of the Wayfarers in their visit to Boston.

"Yes," agreed Bee, "it is. I see the nose."

The peculiar characteristic of this young woman was her very prominent, sharp nose, which the girls had commented upon, and which feature, coupled with a stinging voice, had earned for her the pseudonym of "Wasp." Patsy and Bee both involuntarily leaned forward now, as these strangers exchanged loudly and freely their opinions of the surrounding summer places.

"How long you goin' to be down the Cape?" another asked, in reply to the remark about Provincetown.

"Can't exactly tell," came the answer. "You know our handsome coz, Torry" (with a drawling of scorn through the "handsome"), "he's got somethin' on we're bound to shut off. Grandfather's property, you know. Well," (an effective pause), he ain't goin' to close any deal jest now, while Millie and me are awake, an' that may change plans some!"

Mabel and Eleanor had caught in on the conversation. The evident security of that open, public place rang out in confidence, as the clerks chatted on, and not the slightest attempt was

made to disguise the facts they were thus vocally publishing.

The Wayfarers were looking at the stage but listening to this conversation. Patsy was so alert she failed to hear a question put by Aunt Martha, but Bee answered it for her.

"Ain't that fellar handsome, though?" put in a girl with enormous ear puffs. Again she referred to Torry. The light spotted her from a tree-lamp. "I seen him at a Cattle Show once, an' his sister, too, is awful pretty."

"He's handsome, but like the rest of that kind, wasteful," replied the Wasp. "He thinks money's coined to gild his sister with, and to help him fly around college. His sister had a stroke, you know?"

"No! Not that, young girl?"

"She ain't so young—near as old as Millie. But she had it anyway. Thought she'd die, but he has her in Boston now for treatment. You see——" the heads went together this time as the real kernel of the secret seemed imminent. A few moments of intense whispering, and the heads separated again.

"I don't blame you a bit," agreed the ear-puffed girl.

"But it's a little risky," commented the younger

sister of the sharp-nosed one. "Bell takes a lot of chances, I think."

"Better'n losin' a lot of cost," came back the other. "But, say! look at that picture! Supposed to be the old Pilgrims landing." She "tee-hee-ed" outright. "Looks like a clam-bake party at the Point."

"Sure does! There's old Patches and the Colonel. Look-it the painters' outfit."

"Shssh! That's Capt'n Standish. Look't the college cap and the Brown boys' mackinaw. You know they wear them at Brown——" injected the girl on the end of the line.

A gentleman who had been fidgeting, and plainly trying to subdue the noisy, irreverent ones, now turned squarely upon them.

"If you girls don't care for this, you had best leave," he told them sharply. "That's a picture of the Forefathers, and it isn't put up there for youngsters to ridicule."

A sudden irrepressible titter swept over the accused group. Then, feeling the anger of many near them, they chocked back the objectionable mirth and sank deep into the straw-cushioned benches. Patsy had scarcely noticed what was passing on the screen, and Bee was no more interested. Both having "premonitory creeps"

just before leaving for the Park, and each having expressed the belief that "something was due to happen," caused both to feel now that this chance conversation furnished their clue.

The moon had risen, and was "peeking" in through the trees, when a girl in Priscilla garb very primly stepped in front of the canvas, and recited "The Courtship of Miles Standish." She evidently was a well-trained girl, perhaps from some local high school, for her young voice was well-rounded and softly modulated, yet it sought out every listener in the little assemblage. At finishing she received the applause due her earnest effort, and gracefully took an encore.

"Sweet!" commented Aunt Martha.

"Lovely!" agreed Patsy, won at last to attention for the performance.

A brief intermission afforded those in the next bench chance to speak again, defiantly, if not really antagonistically.

"Let's know how it comes off, Bell," said one. "And give us an invite if you have Torry over for a week-end."

"No danger! He hates us like poison," came the answer. "But jest you wait'n see! Pa says I've got the best nose fer business in the hull family, an' now's the time to prove it," and "the

girl with the nose" shamelessly gulped down that negative compliment.

"Ah, let's go," suggested the girl near the end. "This is no good. There's dancin' down at the beach. Come on!"

"Hurry, they're startin' and we'll get ragged if we—interrupt," voiced the Wasp, as the unpopular party shuffled out of the seats and down the steps covering the handsome old patient rocks, off the beautiful bay-washed beach.

"They're gone!" said Eleanor in relief.

"Such rude girls," whispered Aunt Martha, ignorant of the clues they had dropped on Patsy's tingling ears.

"Don't mention it to the girls," the latter whispered to Beatrice significantly. "We must try to follow them up."

"Not easy," was all Beatrice could answer, for now the entertainment was over, and there was a grand rush for the outgoing trolley.

CHAPTER XIV

PILGRIMS AND WAYFARERS

"OH, Bee, I'm so excited!" declared Patsy next day, dragging her companion down to the seat by the side of the memorable pond, to escape from Mab and Nell with her newly-confirmed suspicions. "Those girls are plotting something desperate. And of course it has to do with that old property matter. How do you suppose we can get around giving that information to Torry?"

"I can't see a way, unless you write him frankly, and ask him to meet us some place," suggested Bee.

"Oh, Bee!" and Patsy struggled with a blush. "That would seem—queer," she faltered.

"Not if we told him it was about an important matter."

"But I should have to tell Aunt Martha. I

wouldn't meet a young man without her permission."

"Oh, I know that, Pat," it was Bee's turn to flush, "but couldn't we manage it?"

"I'm just thinking in circles, it seems to me," admitted Patsy. "I don't believe that type of girl is so much dangerous as she is foolish, but I didn't like that spell of whispering."

"And the other's remark about it being risky," added Bee. They were seated now in a flat-bottom rowboat that always stood at the shore, but never seemed to be used for rowing.

"We wouldn't need to worry so, perhaps, for property is only property after all," reflected the alert Patsy, "but in Beth's condition even a slight shock would be dreadful."

"Yes, that's the first consideration. Then there's Torry's college year, and he's just started. I tell you, little Red Head," with an affectionate droop of her own brown head on Patsy's convenient shoulder, "this is rather important field work in our Social Service."

"Does this come under Social Service? I thought it was only in helping—more needy cases."

"Indeed, it does," replied the student. "Family case-work has no limitations, and this may mean

the keeping together of a most important type of family—two lone, big children."

"Oh, my, how lovely! I mean how nice that our work can be standardized. I have to write up the entire case, I suppose," and she laughed lightly.

"Yes, that's essential. But I wouldn't leave the notebook around for the babes. By the way, they seem to be having a wonderful time out here. I think it's an unmitigated blessing to have such simple, childish faith in human nature as those children have. All they need is a few nicely-dressed, good-mannered individuals to lavish their charms upon. They're off at tennis now, I suppose, and will be back by eleven, drumming us up for the swim. Isn't Mab just darling in that new outing suit? The foliage-green on the white serge makes a blossom of her."

"You have an eye, Bee," said Patsy, reverting to the newly acquired New England habit of leaving off the "eye for what?" It was an attractive little trick, and she played it with naïve charm. "Now, I like Nell's marigold equally well," added Patsy. "I think that yellow serge is just as pretty, and gives Nell such a glow."

"Too bad they can't add your compliment," teased Bee. "I don't see but what you look

pretty nice in that glorious Roman stripe. And it won't soil."

"Permit me," mocked Patsy, touching the true-blue tennis skirt of Beatrice. "There is nothing more correct, nor more attractive, than this," and she smiled so comprehensively that the look seemed to include the universe.

"All of which is neither here nor there on our mystery of the salesladies' duplicity. I couldn't very well run in the department; men's hose is so prosaic," she deplored.

"And from last accounts they've gone into the home-decorating. Don't you remember they said they were down here to help with some private work, out around Provincetown?"

"Yes, but what could those girls do at decorating?" scoffed Patsy.

"Unroll the bunting. Or they might hold the tacks——"

"In their mouths, I fancy," and this thought turned on the laughter tap for both ebullient Patsy and serious Bee. Visions of those two country girls, with their arms full of bunting and mouths full of tacks, fairly convulsed the deliberators until it seemed that the staid old flat-bottomed "Turtle" rocked its side in good fellowship.

"Whatever could they intend to do?" Patsy brought up when the "meat of their laughter" was fully digested.

"That's one of the privileges denied us, Pat dear. We can't see into others' brains, nor even guess what is going on in such peculiar brains as the little clerks seem infested with. But shall we write Torry? That's the point at issue," declared Bee, smoothing the little locks of curly brown hair that tried to follow the breeze, in spite of her combs and numerous pins.

"Yes, Bee. I couldn't take the responsibility of knowing that those youngsters are plotting against Beth, without letting him know. We couldn't possibly worry Beth with business, and if we were to tell this lovely little Aunt Abbie, whom Torry told us about, she might mention it to Beth. The only safe way, of course, is to write him," decided Patsy, jabbing on her brilliant head the hawk-protecting cap, while both girls prepared to answer the call from Mab now running down the little hill.

Along the west coast of Plymouth, on Cape Cod Bay, are many fashionable summer places, while Rocky Point—one of the little jetties that fringe the coast—is, perhaps, the most cosmopolitan. Looking north, the Gurnet with its

dazzling-white Twin Lights, offers a never-failing magnet for the strangers who answer the lure of quaint Cape Cod.

On the Plymouth Beach our friends were enjoying the finest sort of bathing, for what water is equal to the salt of the bay basin? And what flow of gentle tide affords better actual swimming?

Even Aunt Martha, in her neat little alpaca suit, tried out a few long-neglected strokes, while the girls just reveled in the "overhand, the crawl stroke, breast stroke," and their variations, not omitting the mermaid dives from springboards and dock ends.

Mabel and Eleanor were delighting in races with girls from the Inn, while Patsy and Bee devoted themselves to the more entertaining element—little children in their tiny togs which made them look like living Kewpies as they tumbled on the sands and dared the playful wavelets to touch their pink "toesies."

Bathing hour, always short, seemed clipped off without full measure to-day, for the water was delightful, the air caressed like a breeze from a feathery fan, and the sky seemed an inverted spectacular of indescribable pageantry.

There were but fifteen minutes of time left

when Nell came in on a wave, and then promptly collected the girls.

"I almost forgot," she announced, wringing out her dripping little skirt. "I learned a lot about the Pilgrims and their first trip in these waters. Do all come and sit down to dry off, while I speak my piece," and Nellie picked up dimples in her smile.

"De-ligh-ted!" cried out Patsy. "As a matter of fact, Nell, I feel rather guilty in neglecting the historical part. We have just time to hear your declamation. Let 'er go!" and Patsy stretched out in the sand at Aunt Martha's laced-up shoes.

"Now please don't make me laugh," begged the self-appointed orator, "I'm going to begin at Provincetown Harbor, directly opposite us."

"That's lovely," ventured Patsy, but Bee clapped a damp hand over the tittering mouth.

Nellie began again. "Coasting along the side of Cape Cod at the right——"

"Who?" It was Patsy questioning, half-mockingly.

"The Forefathers in their shallop from the Mayflower," from the indignant Nell.

"Oh," a mere general underbreath.

"Some of the exploring party on foot——"

The wild laugh and rolling in the sand would have discouraged a less courageous narrator, but Nell adjusted her story, and declared that too much talking had driven her ashore.

"Well, anyway," she insisted, "some of the party waded through half-frozen waters, I couldn't—forget that——" Again the dimples played. "And now, please, listen. Mab, do stop digging your toes! I can't keep my own still——"

"Nellie, dear, what about the wading party?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Martha," Nell sat up straight in the solid sunshine. "I'm glad *you* like my history. They waded through the half-frozen water, through the surf or across brooks, slowly making their way to land. Constantly alert, and often attacked by their enemies, the Indians, you know, the shallop now with all the party aboard, was rowed back from where they had made their personal explorations, I suppose," she interjected. "And they now near Manomet Point. That's just there, where all this happened!"

All eyes scanned the beach down past Rocky Point and White Horse Beach. Manomet Point is the next little nose of land that pokes itself into the bay. They regarded it attentively.

"Go on, Nell, you're doing beautifully," declared Patsy. "We must have an evening of

fun before we leave Plymouth, and we will surely make you our Burton Holmes."

Nell jumped up and perched herself on the highest of a group of rocks. She waved a hand grandly out toward the old bay unspoiled by historic flattery.

"It begins to snow," said Nellie, and Patsy swallowed some sand in choking back a pardonable hot-day laugh. "And rain, and the winds blow up an angry sea. The hinge of the rudder breaks—the shallop's rudder, you know, and oars must steer the heavy craft."

"I recall that page in history," remarked Aunt Martha gravely. "I have often thought of the anguish that hour must have brought to the Pilgrims."

Thus encouraged, Nell bit her lip to prompt memory, and bravely proceeded:

"Pressing on with their oars, the shivering party are all but discouraged when Master Coppin, the pilot, bids them be of good cheer, for he sees the harbor he had promised them."

"Three cheers for Master Coppin," voiced Beatrice. "But don't let us interrupt you, Nell," with a sly tone and a playful thrust of tiny shells.

"I won't," agreed the elocutionist. "Across

She waved a hand grandly out toward the old bay.

the bay they drive," she raised her voice till others about her listened; "keeping on good sail to reach the harbor before night-fall, when crash goes the mast!" (the young voice rang out bravely now) "broken into three pieces, and the shallop is all but wrecked."

She paused, and her audience breathed deeply. After all, this was a fitting tribute to that eventful pilgrimage, and the Wayfarers were not alone in their attentive attitude of admiration.

"Go on," urged Aunt Martha gently.

"I couldn't forget what happened," said loyal little Nell, "but I may be off on the wording.

"A flood tide lifted them and swung them in past the Gurnet's nose,—see the Gurnet?" she pointed to the rocky headland. "And Master Coppin, finding himself in a strange place, threw up his hands and cried out: 'The Lord be merciful to us. I never saw this place before.' "

"And he almost drove them in on the rocks," assisted Eleanor.

"Yes, he would have, but for a seaman who ordered them to turn, if they were men, and next thing they found themselves under the lee of a small island just before nightfall. There it is, the third highland to the left, the first is Gurnet, the second Saquaish and the third is—I suppose

that's Clark's Island or very near it, where they spent the first Sabbath, before coming out again across the bay and landing on Plymouth Rock. There," finished Nell, her cheeks burning from more than the sun's rays, "I was so fascinated by that part of the old Bradford history I just memorized it. So many people talk of the landing, but I don't believe many take the trouble to read it up," she declared, with wisdom only accounted for by the tinge of romance that permeated the Pilgrim's history.

"Eleanor Perry, you're a perfect—brick!" declared Patsy enthusiastically, "beside which I fall to common sand in comparison."

"I was thrilled," acclaimed Bee.

"And I was astounded," declared the sister Mab. "I am going to have you give that all over again when we get home. It's just splendid!"

And wasn't it, really?

But Patsy and Bee could not give entire attention to the Mayflower story; they had the more pressing issue of Beth Brandon's safety to contemplate.

"I'll write the letter directly after lunch," whispered Patsy, giving her head a wild shake after removing the pond-lily rubber cap, "and

woe be unto you, Beatrice Forbes, if your advice leads me into trouble."

"I'll stand for the woe," agreed Beatrice, "but I would never stand for shirking."

"Me, nuther," flashed Patsy, and the ringing of the lunch bell brought all the Wayfarers back again to things mundane.

CHAPTER XV

PROVINCETOWN EN FETE

AS must happen to all travellers, and the Wayfarers were of the "roadster type," many important events were precipitated through correspondence, and when, a day or two before their outset for the Provincetown celebration, they received a letter from Rolly's mother, their plans for the summer camp at an old Massachusetts town were quickly settled.

But not without some disappointment.

"We can't even get that homestead," groaned Bee. "Did you ever see such luck?"

"But, my dear," reasoned Aunt Martha. "You have no idea what a demand there is for summer places. And the one that Mrs. Sherman can get may even be better than the other," she consoled.

"Just fancy," put in Patsy, whose face was alight with pleasurable anticipation, "this is one

of the two old places, and the old men who owned them were just like brothers. Except that Mrs. Sherman was employed in the one, I can't see what difference there could possibly be. Besides, she tells us the available place has no-end of berries, all kinds, Bee, and you may just camp in a berry patch over night to be handy for breakfast. I vote we tell Mrs. Sherman we'll take that place for the month of August, and that we get the agent's name, quickly, and mail him a check on deposit, before someone else comes along and swoops down in our apple-tree hammocks. I'm just crazy for that old place, and if it were not for the actual obligation of paying tribute to our forefathers, by attending the Provincetown celebration, I would feel like running out there, right now."

"Shall we be near the water?" ventured Mab.

"Yes, there's little Assonet Bay, which is fed by the Taunton River, and intakes of salt water all the way from the ocean," said Patsy. "And Mrs. Sherman told me and Bee, when we were out there, that the place often echoes Indian war whoops when the wind is high, or something like that," she amended, affecting a more truthful and literal tone.

"Yes, Patsy," decided Aunt Martha. "Since I have seen Mrs. Sherman, I feel she is just the woman we need, and this place is only a hundred and fifty dollars for the month, with the garden and fruit. I really think it is quite a discovery and agree with you that we should take it."

"So do I," chimed in Nell, "and I vote for the berry patch. Any strawberries?"

"Not specified, but probable," replied Patsy. "I've heard tell that 'strawberries from them parts is right smart vic'tles, an' shouldn't wonder but we cud sell 'em out ter market.'" Patsy twanged this beautifully, but it fell a little short on accent.

"We'll take your word fer it, Cy," replied Bee, "'an' if crops is good, shouldn't wonder but we'ed make somethin', seein' as how this here year is a good 'un fer garden stuff.'"

"Me an' S'amathy here'll guve yu' a hand any time on' the medder'," struggled Nell. "'T'aint s'long since we was a'milkin' an' a' potatoein', an' a hoein' things a'long of a piece o'land out by Tiverton,'" she ended, with a merry chuckle that did more than the words to make the frantic effort effective.

"Good idee to sign contracts ahead of time," suggested Patsy. "I cal'alate it's a sight easier

to eat berries 'n' 'tis t' peddle 'em. S'manthy" (to Mab), "s'pose you write out a paper, puttin' thet there offer down in black an' white. Then we'll heve suthin' to go by when we light on thet there berry patch."

"Oh, let's," exclaimed Mabel. "Let's draw up a contract, each taking over certain duties——"

"Better wait until we see the lay of the land," advocated Patsy. "It may be a swamp that raises nothing but pussy-willows and skunk cabbage; then what?"

So the reply of acceptance was sent to Mrs. Sherman, and the girls now felt that every day of their precious vacation had been assigned to its possible programme of joy and adventure.

Patsy and Bee waited anxiously for the reply from Torry. Very carefully Patsy had worded her letter to him, merely saying that she would like to see him very soon on an important business matter, and that it was not in reference to securing the old place as a camp, for she realized the impossibility of such arrangements. She added that they had taken a place which she hoped would be equally as attractive. This letter went off before the answer to Mrs. Sherman, but at its sending both Patsy and Bee decided the

Sherman place should be taken, and that it did offer some alluring attractions.

When the answer came it was not from Torry. It was merely a very polite line from Miss Abbie Truesdale, written on her own finely-monogrammed paper, and it briefly stated that Mr. Brandon was in Boston, and was not expected back for some days.

Bee and Patsy swallowed hard, and made wry faces in appreciation of this. There was appended a line referring to Beth's improvement, but with it came a hint. It was this:

"While she is much stronger, her brother is most anxious that no thought of business shall distress her, so I have not mentioned the arrival of your note. I am merely answering from the outside address given, surmising the message within may relate to business."

"Smart old lady," commented Patsy. "However did she guess?"

As if this particular day brought a bargain in the mail bag, there was also a long letter from Patsy's father, and this conveyed the news that he might join them in August, if his old friend Judge Davis could arrange a fishing "spree."

Patsy danced in delight at this.

"I know where there are more fishes than those

counted in the Bible story," she declared. "The water is solid with them, but——" her face fell, "that's a fishing school—I mean a school fishery, or whatever they call the farm that the government takes care of to raise fish on. And, of course, no one is allowed to fish there."

"You mean out Taunton way, where the herrings run, don't you, Pat?" asked Mab. "I heard the fish out there were, as you say, just solid. We ought to go see them."

"But they don't run at all seasons," interposed Aunt Martha. "I think it is in early summer and spring when that sight is featured. However, I am sure Judge Davis will arrange a fine fishing trip for Robert, and it will be wonderful to have him near our camp for a while."

"They may want to go out to Maine for some of the cold lake products," demurred Patsy. "But we will try to fix it up with our gallant judge for him to find a suitable place in Massachusetts. If there are no more letters to be considered, I move we adjourn," she suggested.

Provincetown is directly across the bay and it was on that little point of land, on the tip of Cade Cod, that the Pilgrims first put in before making their final selection of Plymouth for their real settlement. The preliminary celebration of

the three hundredth anniversary of the landing was to occur there during the summer of 1920, and to this the Wayfarers were preparing to set sail, in one of the many launches daily setting out from Plymouth shores.

Again the trusty guide books were eagerly scanned, the success of Eleanor's historic effort spurring each one on to learn the story of the "Shrines," even of the Norsemen's reported visit there in the year 1001 A. D., and leading up to the Pilgrims' coming in 1620, in honor of which event the Tercentenary was now being celebrated. Each Wayfarer had her own guide book, and each seemed to have discovered a particular choice morsel of historic lore.

It was Mab who found out that the first child born in New England was welcomed at Provincetown, while the *Mayflower* was resting there.

Mabel waved the little book in the very faces of her companions, insisting they should listen to the fact that Peregrine White was the first baby of New England; but Patsy thought the most interesting discovery was that of the Norsemen's visit to Provincetown.

"We may see the spot at North Truro, over there," she insisted, as they neared the tail of land. "That's where Professor Horsford places

'Lief's Landsfall,' and you see, Mab, your little pilgrim baby, Peregrine, has left no mark on any stone. Too bad! I think so myself."

They could now see the great Pilgrim Monument of gray stone that towered high above the surrounding narrow landscape, and offered its story to the passing mariner, with that rugged simplicity typical of the Forefathers themselves.

"How rich in historic shrines all the places hereabouts are?" commented Bee. "If they hadn't come to Provincetown, but had continued straight on to the west shore of the Bay, we wouldn't have had this picturesque spot to visit. This is really Cape Cod!"

"And the land curls up like a fish's tail," said Nellie, with a dimple or two doing reverence.

"What sort of fish have curly tails, Nell?" inquired Patsy, cruelly.

"Eels," chirped Nell, undaunted.

As they entered, the harbor was alive with craft decorated in flags and emblems, while all along the water's edge the little town had taken on a holiday dress, fringed with the banners whose subjects had brought their gift of true patriotism to America's shores.

The United States North Atlantic fleet assembles in the circular harbor every summer, and

in 1920 this was augmented by visiting war-craft, among these *Constance,* of the British fleet, and the French cruiser, *Ville d'Ys,* coming into special prominence.

Patsy and Bee would have enjoyed a trip to the *Constance,* which was offered as a special inducement, but Aunt Martha objected, as the small boats going in and out were apparently over-taxed in capacity; so the plan was abandoned.

"Oh, this would be just the place for daddy's fishing spree," declared Patsy, after hearing an old Portuguese fisherman tell of the marvels of the finny tribe that could be had for the dropping of a line. "I heard a man say," she repeated, "that cod, mackerel, haddock and sea bass were very plentiful, and the industry of the whole place is that of fishing. One can easily see that."

"I have something to tell of this harbor," spoke Mab, not to be outdone by the others in the history fleet. "Here the first clothes were washed by the women from the *Mayflower,* while the men explored."

"There should be a model laundry hereabouts," commented Patsy. "And I imagine the instinct for cleanliness still persists. Just look at that fisherman's outfit!"

They were facing "High Pole Hill," where is situated the Pilgrims' Monument, which towers two hundred and fifty feet above the town. The famous Highland light on its bluff at North Truro could be seen a short distance off, and of Long Point, at the very tip of the Cape, our Wayfarers had a view that included the light which guards the entrance to Provincetown Harbor.

Everything was festive and gala, as it was but two days before that the celebration proper had been ushered in with a stirring religious pageant, corresponding to the spirit of the Pilgrims themselves, who were wont, always, to put the service of the Master first, and thus dedicate their own welfare to the Cause that carries His sacred banner.

There was much to see, but more to feel, and neither feature was wasted in its emotional effect upon the Wayfarers.

Perhaps it was the quaintness of it all that offered the strongest appeal. There were the school girls in their dainty little Puritan garb—Priscillas everywhere, and the white-stockinged, buckle-shoed boys, some with make-believe muskets acting as guards, and others with the picturesque broad-brimmed hats, and even velvet

costumes, soft as those of modern knights of the drama, and far more effective than modern gorgeousness, with the ruffs and belts. It was all a beautiful spectacle, indeed, and required little more than the costuming for its effect, for was not the spirit of the entry to Provincetown still there, engraven on the rocks, written on the sands, and pictured in the clouds?

"We must find the Norsemen's spot, wherever North Truro is," declared Patsy, when many little shops had been visited, quaint souvenirs bought, and the Wayfarers' hearts satisfied with local sight-seeing. Everything was stamped "Pilgrim," "Puritan" or "Mayflower." Patsy rejoiced in a Cape Cod fire-lighter, a brass tankard, with brass tray and the torch which is the "lighter" when immersed in inflamable oil.

Mabel and Eleanor secured an old bellows which, they were sure would delight the hearts of the folks at home, while Bee, the studious, bought some quaint pictures and some dainty little booklets to give as souvenirs to her mother and intimate friends "out home."

"We could spend days around here and yet keep on seeing things," remarked Mabel, who was plainly delighted with the big, general holiday that swayed natives and visitors alike.

In front of one of the stores an auto had stopped, just as our girls were passing along.

"Look, Bee," said Patsy quietly, "there are the sales girls!"

Turning, both almost faced the girls first seen in Boston, and again at the open air theatre out Plymouth way. Both stepped from the car and quickly entered a store, in front of which fruits and vegetables were displayed.

With wondering glances, Patsy and her party continued on their way, and it was a full hour later, just before time to take the boat back across the bay, that something startling happened, and recalled the presence of these girls in Provincetown.

They were all standing on the wharf, waiting for the boat, when, to their intense surprise, Torry Brandon rushed up to them. He scarcely greeted them before he exclaimed:

"Have you seen Beth anywhere? I am almost frantic looking for her!"

"Beth!" came a chorus.

"Yes, something very alarming has happened. Aunt Abbie didn't know the importance of having Beth stay with her, and I didn't want to worry Beth with business, but the fact is, we will——" he hesitated, then continued, "we may

lose a splendid chance, unless I can get Beth to sign this paper in time for me to return it to the attorney to-night."

He held a packet in his hand, and it was evident the young man was laboring under great anxiety.

Aunt Martha murmured her consideration, but it was Patsy and Bee who sensed a possible solution to the mystery.

It took but a few seconds to impart this suspicion to the excited Torry Brandon.

CHAPTER XVI

BETH BRANDON'S RESCUE

JUST how Patsy pieced together that story, and gave its summary to the astonished and frightened Torry, would not be easy to recount, but, with her indomitable spirit, she did surmount the difficulty.

Standing on the pier, his handsome face flushed and his agitation refusing to subside, Torry heard from Patsy's lips the suspicion first gleaned in the Boston department store, when these two strange girls made slighting remarks betraying deep-set antagonism to someone named as "Torry" and associated with "Beth."

Further, both Bee and Patsy told of the actual threat overheard in the open air theatre, when these same girls freely discussed, with a number of companions, something mysterious they intended to do to prevent something else mysterious from being accomplished.

"That's it," said Torry anxiously. "I see the trick, now! These girls knew this paper had to be signed to-day, and they deliberately planned to take Beth off, out of my reach until the time expired."

"But why did Miss Truesdell let her go with known enemies?" asked Aunt Martha quite reasonably.

"The girls tactfully paved the way," replied the young man, while his eyes wandered searchingly over parties swarming about. "They came first and spent an afternoon at our stopping place. Everything was pleasant, I suppose, as they could pretend it to be, and Beth is so forgiving and so trustful. But think of that frail girl being out so long!" he broke off anxiously. "We only stopped off here for a few days, just to give her a chance to see the celebration." He sighed first, then threw up his head in brave boyish fashion. "But I'm going to find her if she is in Provincetown! Of course our financial loss is a mere secondary consideration. It's Beth that counts."

"Let me help," begged Patsy. "I will leave Auntie and one or two of the girls some place where they can be comfortable, while Bee and I, and either Eleanor or Mab, can take a cab and search."

"Thanks! I'm sure that will help," said Torry eagerly. "I am greatly worried about Beth. She never could stand these motor-boats. Suppose I get a launch and scour around, while you try the streets?"

"Yes, I think that a good plan," agreed Patsy with increasing agitation. "I'll just get that car over there, and go directly to the fruit store. If they ordered anything delivered, we may trace them in that way."

Then began the search. Torry was soon seen racing over the waters of Cape Cod Bay, in a little launch he hired from a willing boatman, while Patsy and Bee were in the red-striped auto, pointing out to the driver such streets as they wished to survey.

That they had been correct in their surmise of the salesgirls' duplicity was only too evident, but the danger to Beth, so lately recovered from her serious condition, obscured all other thoughts or considerations, as they rushed on through the crowded streets, hoping against hope, to discover the car in which the fugitive might be riding.

Torry had furnished Patsy with the family name of these girls, given as Drake, so that it was for a Miss Drake she inquired at the fruit store.

"Yes," replied the man. "I sent some fruit

to Miss Drake, yistiddy, and she came in and fetched more herself to-day. Let me see, Tod," to his helper, "whereabouts was that you took them there peaches?"

"Which peaches?" asked Tod, dropping an entire measure of fruit back into a big basket, lest he confuse the orders. He was paying attention to the boss just now.

"Salt mackeral! Can't you think and hold things to onct?" demanded the proprietor. "Couple of yachtmen's awaiting for thet order! But listen, now you're out of it. Recollect—two girls comes in here buyin' peaches, an' biddin' down fer them? Allus want another piled on an' a cent took off! Had a swampy tone o' voice, like they live out Boston way? Yes, I see you do recall! Well, that's them. Where do they put up? Where'd you fetch the last bargain of peaches to?"

Patsy and Bee could scarcely keep still during this foolish and time-wasting monologue, but as to hurrying the man! They knew better. Finally direction was given by Tod, and eagerly accepted by Patsy and Bee, they in turn quickly relaying it to their waiting driver.

But although the boarding place was found easily enough, it was not to be expected that the

Misses Drake would be there at that hour of the afternoon.

They had gone "auto-mo-beel ridin'" according to the prim little landlady, and "they took their meals out," so she couldn't say when they would be back.

"Do you happen to know what garage they hired their car from?" Patsy asked, clinging to a feeble straw of hope.

"Well, yes, seems to me I did notice that car," replied the landlady. "I'm sure I saw Clem Trivet on the front seat a-drivin'. Clem has a place over near the Point," and she gave directions to be followed for reaching it. "You may find out something over there. 'Anybody took sick? What's the perticular matter?" she asked, not unreasonably.

"We are in a hurry to reach a friend who must catch a train," replied Bee, already down the three narrow steps and heading for the auto at the gate.

"Want t' know!" they heard the surprised and curious little woman exclaim as they hurried off.

"Here y'u are," their driver announced after showing how his car could run when occasion called for speed. "This here is Clem's shop."

Patsy sprang out and made a quick survey of

the garage. It was partly wood, evidently a big barn originally, but was strengthened and made fire-resisting in spots with concrete runs and floors, while metal frames arched a good-sized door, under which, just now, a car could be seen standing.

"I think that's the car," Patsy said to Bee, as both made their way in at its side.

Voices further strengthened this supposition, for girls were undoubtedly waiting in the car while some repairs were being made, and dodging in past oil cans and hose attachments, the next moment Patsy and Bee confronted the girl "Bell" on the front seat, while the other sister, Millie, and yes—that was Beth ensconced in the rear!

"Beth!" exclaimed Patsy eagerly, almost forgetting the importunity of her quest, in the joy of meeting Beth Brandon.

"Oh, Patsy!" called back the girl from the car. "However did you get here?"

"Looking for a little runaway," replied Patsy, determined now to make all possible speed to fulfill her promise to Torry. "Beth, do come in our car. Your brother is most anxiously waiting and hunting for you. He must leave this town very shortly and——"

"She'll do nothing of the kind," came a sharp

retort from the girl in the front. "She came out with us, and we'll bring her back!"

The battle was on. This the Wayfarers realized instantly, and just how to proceed without exciting Beth——

"We came for Miss Brandon and are very intimate friends," insisted Patsy. "She must come back at once in our car, if she wishes to see her brother."

"But we have lovely plans all made for the entire afternoon, and I guess we are not going to have them all spoiled," the girl sitting beside Beth insisted. It was not hard for the Wayfarers to guess why the plan "for the entire afternoon" had been so definitely made.

"Oh, I *must* see Torry," Beth at last found opportunity to call out, although the two girls with her were even now trying to prevent her from saying anything.

"We'll take you wherever he is, just as soon as this tire is fixed," quickly offered the girl at front.

"But we can not wait for anything," Patsy declared, her temper beginning to show its edge.

"Well, you have just got to," retorted she with the sharp nose. "The idea! Makin' all this fuss!"

"Beth, don't you want to come along with us?" asked Bee. The mechanic had stopped his work, and now stood gaping at the verbal combatants.

"Certainly, I do," replied Beth, her voice quivering.

"Then you shall come," insisted Bee.

"But I can't—can this car move out?" faltered Beth, her physical condition was not such as to warrant walking yet, the girls realized.

"Sure it can," spoke the workman. "I'll just shove it——"

"You don't need to," shrilled the sharp one. "Why should we be delayed? We have just as important business to take care of as anyone else."

Patsy was getting desperate. Time was flying, and every moment doubly precious. She realized she must act quickly, and with no possibility of error.

"Just a minute," she said pleasantly, to throw the antagonists off their guard. "Will you kindly give my friend a hand?" to the workman.

"Sartin' sure," replied the man good-naturedly, stepping up to the side of the car where Beth was leaning eagerly waiting for a chance of escape.

"No, no!" cried the sharp-nosed girl. "Don't you dare lift her out! How do we know these strangers?"

"Maybe kidnappers!" added the other desperately.

The workman hesitated. He almost pushed off his oil-cloth cap in perplexity.

"Nonsense," cried Bee. "It is most urgent that this young lady meet her brother. He is on the bay looking for her, while we traced her here. Please assist her to our car," she begged.

"Wait a minute," interrupted Patsy. She ran out to the machine standing at the curb, spoke to the driver, then stepped on the running board as he turned in, and came up the garage drive, until one car touched the other.

"Here, please," she spoke to the driver of her own taxi. "Just lift this young lady out——"

"Sure thing," agreed the man, who was better at guessing conditions than was the mechanic; and before the salesgirls could do more than make themselves ridiculous, Beth was gently lifted out, placed in the other car and the clutch thrown in for the backing out into the roadway.

She sighed happily as she sat between the two Wayfarers, and Patsy realized instantly the necessity of treating the escape lightly. Already

the convalescent girl was trembling—she should not be further excited.

"Oh, how splendid of you——" Beth faltered.

"Pure selfishness," insisted Patsy. "Do you suppose we were going to let those girls have you while we hung around here just dying to see you?" She laughed lightly, and that a strain of nerves was thus freed scarcely mattered in the effect made upon Patsy's audience.

"Oh, it is just wonderful to see you again," breathed Beth. "I have dreamed of you, and dreamed of you——"

"Nothing on us," returned Patsy with pardonable levity. "We have talked of you until your name utters itself in all our sighs." She leaned over and whispered to the driver, whereat the car shot ahead with added speed.

"And to think how lovely and well you look," put in Bee. Her own cheeks were aflame with excitement.

"I can walk, but the doctors warned me to be very careful," replied the dark-eyed one. "After all Torry's wonderful work, it would never do for me to be careless." At the brother's name her voice fell to a caressing sweetness.

"He resented your running off," put in Patsy, paving the way for the dash that might have to

be made when sister met brother with that precious document to be signed.

"But those girls were so insistent," exclaimed Beth. "And, as we haven't been very good friends lately, I felt I should not repel their advances."

Bee's eye caught Patsy's flash as the latter shot out a look of understanding. "Their advances, indeed!" it echoed significantly.

One more turn and the car swerved into the wharf where Aunt Martha and the two Perry girls were standing, waiting.

"Here they come," Mabel almost shouted; and the Wayfarers cared little about the attention they attracted, for, as the automobile with the captured Beth drew up to the edge of the pier, Torry Brandon just ran along the same pier to meet them and reclaim the anxious, excited sister.

His smile, wider than usual, betrayed to Patsy and her friends his acknowledgement of their complete success in overcoming one feature, at least, of his peculiar difficulty, but with two treacherous girls working against him and his unsuspecting sister——

As Bee stepped out of the car he sprang in beside Beth, fountain pen and paper ready for her signature.

CHAPTER XVII

CONFIRMED SUSPICION

"HOW dreadfully exciting!" murmured Beth innocently, as her brother, after obtaining her signature and kissing her hurriedly, was ready to dash off again to the station.

"I'll say so!" he replied. "And only for our friends we would have lost out to-day, Beth. This means that we may come in with a small strip of land on a very big business proposition. A company wanted room to bridge over a freight run, and if your signature was lacking we could not have put it through. It required two-thirds of the heirs' consent, you see, and, of course, the Drake end was opposed. But it's all right, now," and he folded the precious document carefully. "This will be in the hands of those gentlemen in Boston by nine to-morrow; that's the final mo-

ment allowed," he finished. The next minute he was off.

Bee had secured the services of a second taxi driver (they would not abandon him to whom they had good reason to be grateful), and as Torry set out for his train there were two parties ready for the drive to Beth's cottage.

"I shall be genuinely glad to see Miss Truesdell," Aunt Martha remarked, "and I hope we may be able to meet again during the summer."

But it was a very much excited Miss Abbie whom they confronted on the small, latticed porch of the cottage near the beach. In fact, her anxiety about the girl who had escaped her charge so mysteriously had all but prostrated the kindly disposed little lady.

Zippy, the frisky terrier, saw Beth returning in the car (he evidently remembered she left in an auto), and his excited barking told the good news first.

"My dear child! My dear child!" Miss Abbie exclaimed, keeping very close to Beth as the driver assisted her to the porch. "To think you missed your brother——"

"But I didn't, Aunt Abbie. I signed the paper, and everything is all right," declared Beth.

"Not really! Oh, I'm so relieved! I should

never have forgiven myself for letting you go. Those scheming, conniving girls!" Miss Abbie gasped.

Beth insisted that all hands come up to the porch for a few minutes, although Patsy explained they really had to catch the seven o'clock boat over to Plymouth.

Kindred souls, indeed, Aunt Martha and Aunt Abbie found themselves to be, and the few moments snatched from the hour of returning, afforded them at least an opportunity of getting acquainted.

The girls chatted gaily, Patsy and her companions studiously avoiding all mention of business to the convalescent Beth, not even referring to their own disappointment in not obtaining the rental of the old homestead, but, rather, detailing some of their interesting experiences over at old Plymouth; Patsy's adventure with the hawk serving to more than crowd the fleeting minutes.

"We may be over again in a day or two," Aunt Martha promised on leaving. "If I can just keep track of these young explorers I'll try to have a day or two remain open on their programme."

So they drove off gaily and triumphantly, although their youthful hearts beat wildly in re-

action, for simple as had appeared the rescue of Beth, each realized there was really a sinister motive behind her detention by the Drake girls.

"I just hope we never meet those horrid, bold, daring girls again," exclaimed Bee, when all were safely settled in the boat heading towards Plymouth.

"No such luck likely," replied Patsy. "We have crossed their path so often I'm afraid we've got the habit. But it seems to me rather fortunate that we did meet them. Otherwise how could we have traced Beth?"

"That's true, of course," replied the other, "but they are so horrid! Really, Pat, in the garage, when our driver came out to help Beth, that girl's eyes just blazed! I could imagine her capable of almost anything."

"Think what we missed, Mab," remarked Nell, who, with her sister, had remained with Aunt Martha and thus did miss the adventure. "But we had a lovely time watching the yachts, Patsy. No end of style coming and going from that modest landing."

"Good-bye, Provincetown!" said Mab, gaily waving a tiny handkerchief at the receeding point of land. "We may see you again, and we may not. Good-bye!"

"But aren't we coming over to see Beth? We had scarcely a chance to know how she is, and everything," deplored Patsy.

"My dear, Miss Truesdell assured me they would start at once for her own cottage down the Cape; that this afternoon's experience had completely unnerved her, and she would not allow the children (she meant Beth and her brother of course) to remain in the territory near those dreadful girls. She seemed to fear their influence would have a serious effect upon Beth."

"I don't wonder," commented Patsy. "It was hard to avoid saying some of the things we felt, especially when the Drake's tried to keep Beth in their car; but I guess we were pretty prudent, if the effort did almost strangle me."

"And I think, all said and done, we may make a creditable entry in our little books for the day's adventure, excitement included," remarked Bee, with finality.

A brief note, but one charged with unmistakable gratitude, came from Torry on the following morning. He expressed most sincere thanks for the "rescue of Beth," as the incident had come to be known, declaring the matter thus made possible meant "a great deal to both him and his sister," and that he now felt constrained to follow

the advice of their friend Miss Truesdell, and take Beth to quieter surroundings. He regretted not being able to have an afternoon's pleasure with the girls, but expressed the hope that this and more would be arranged before the end of summer.

"I have tried to keep from Beth the real problem," he wrote, "but you have probably guessed that the cousins are not easy to escape. I do hope you and your friends, through your kindness to us, have not put yourselves in their treacherous path. If I could have talked with you alone, I would have been glad to explain, but, on account of Beth's presence, there was no opportunity."

"What is the veiled idea?" asked Bee, as Patsy finished reading.

"We have antagonized the salesladies," Patsy answered, glad evidently to have done so.

"But they won't follow us?" queried Nell.

"Not if we see them coming!" This from Bee.

"And we have got to give up Beth again so soon," deplored Mabel.

"Off again, Finnegan!" quoth Patsy, passing the letter around for detailed scrutiny.

"We would not have had time to go over again, anyway," said Nellie. "Don't we have to go into Boston, before we make the journey to camp?"

"Yes, we do," agreed her sister. "At least I do, for I must buy some things we came along merrily without. It's all very nice to travel light, but when it comes to mid-summer I find things a bit bedraggled. My crêpe de chine is like solidified fog, and as for my net, and georgette—well, they might be most any kind of fog!"

"To-morrow morning for Boston," announced Patsy, "and I hope we are making no mistake in not laying in a store of canned stuff. Suppose we find nothing but a little greengrocer's store out that way, and have to live in our berry patch?"

"You can depend, my dear, country folks have good living, and I am sure we are willing to exist as they do for a few weeks. Of course, I shall take a little tea in from Boston," said Aunt Martha, who had just entered the room.

"And a little coffee. I must have good coffee once in a while," declared Patsy, archly.

"And I hope I'll be able to find a place to buy milk chocolate," mused Mab. "I should grow thin without that luxury."

"Reading matter is what worries me," chimed in Bee. "I am counting on reveling in a home-made hammock, under a crabapple tree flanked with two magazines daily."

"Why pick on crabapples?" joked Patsy. "No blossoms, now."

"But they don't hurt as larger apples do. I have a very tender head, you know."

"Oh, but apples of any type are not as bad as hawks. I am already thrilled at the prospect of almost if not an entire month in our own beautiful big old-fashioned house, and I think the surprise of it, whether good or bad, makes it all the more thrilling. I feel just as I used to, Aunt Mattie, when we went to the country the first day. How I did explore and dig into things, even pulling up tomato plants and looking for tomatoes on the roots, like potatoes!"

"I am very glad, however, that Mrs. Sherman is coming with us," qualified Auntie. "I shouldn't exactly fancy a place like that, without having someone along familiar with the territory."

"Spooks!" whispered Patsy, thrusting her pretty face forward in a grimace not all as ugly as she tried to make it.

"There is someone living on the grounds, didn't Mrs. Sherman say?" asked Mab, a bit apprehensively.

"I believe so," replied Bee, "but if there wasn't anyone there, surely six of us, with Rolly, would be quite an army even for a big old place. Pat,

did you decide to get a dark gingham? I suppose we couldn't, by any chance, wear the farmerette outfit?" asked practical Bee.

"Mercy, no!" answered Patsy, pulling a funny face. "Just fancy us in coveralls!"

"They're splendid, just the same," insisted Bee, "and you'll find, pretty lady, if you work in a garden you won't care to be bothered with skirts."

They were making final arrangements for their big adventure, and, with notebook and pencil, each Wayfarer was carefully jotting down such articles as she felt she might need while out in the Dighton-way homestead.

It had been all arranged to have Mrs. Sherman and Rolly go in advance, and have things shipshape by the time the Wayfarers reached the place, so that there was no need for anxiety on the score of tenancy preparations.

"Of course, it is lovely to have Beth able to walk," remarked Patsy, apropos of nothing but reflection, "but, somehow, we seem to need her with us. Wasn't it just splendid even to be with her for that little while? Please, Bee, give us a lecture on psychology. Why are we so fond of a girl who is almost a stranger to us?"

"Perhaps because two distinct elements are working. One is sympathy, the other a natural

attraction. You can't beat that combination," replied Bee, the seer.

"Patsy, dear," said Aunt Martha gravely. "You know I, too, am very much attached to those children, and I rarely take to strangers, but I feel, and I want to tell you, that it is better for you girls, and better for the recovering girl, that your vacation days do not include each other."

"Auntie Mattie Carroll!" exclaimed Patsy. "You perfectly 'crool' little ladykins! Whatever do you mean?"

Aunt Martha resisted the strangling hug. Patsy slipped to the floor in utter, or pretended, despair.

"I mean, dear child, that you and these girls would spend all your time ministering to the supposed wants of Beth; that she would spend all her time in endeavoring to exchange the courtesies, and that both would waste time needlessly, with, perhaps, the result of some detriment to both. Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly. We 'uns would flap around, and make so much breeze, Beth would get cold, or excited. As flappers we would waste our own time and injure her whom we flapped. I feel perfectly silly to-day," admitted Patsy. "Girls,

do you remember the touching song, 'She sat in the hammock?' Let's sing it."

They began in an original and uncertain key:

"She ate so much candy that she up and died!" (Five times repeated).

"She went up to heaven and flip-flop she flied!" (Mab loved this and flew about alarmingly.)

"He went to the funeral but just for the ride!" (It was Nell's turn to echo five times.)

"He stood by the mourners and boo-hoo he cried!" (It took Patsy to do the boo-hooing; and Aunt Martha reminded her three times that there were others in that little inn.)

Then they all "boo-hooed and cried, flip-flopped and flied," and otherwise actually raised such a row that only the striking of the big grandfather's clock in the lower hall saved the situation.

"Our last Plymouth swim!" cried Bee. "And I promised to meet that nice old gentleman who is so interested in our nature work. He is going to send some specimens of——"

"Bee, Bee, Beasy!" exclaimed Patsy, her voice still tingling with the absurd tones of the girl who died from an overdose of sweets. "To think

that you are the only one of us who really found a true love in old Plymouth! Your chevalier may be fifty in years, but he's twenty in heart beats, so you just look out for Sir Launcelot."

"He went to the fun-er-all just for the ride," sang Mabel, but the echoes were blended with the gentle little breeze that blew over Cape Cod as the Wayfarers ran along for their final swim in the beloved Pilgrim Bay.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE INCOMPARABLE FEAST

NOT even the joy of their great expedition obscured the fact that the Drake girls were bent upon more mischief, for, on the very morning of their departure, came a threatening letter boldly signed by both these antagonistic young ladies.

It was addressed to Patsy, and reached her in spite of confused directions. Whether all hands were too busy getting off from the Inn in the bus that carried them to the station, or whether Patsy deliberately planned to keep the matter secret for her own and Bee's analysis first, is not clear, but the fact was, she put the letter in her bag without passing it around, as was usual in Wayfarer courtesy.

"Patsy, dear," said Aunt Martha suddenly, "I almost forgot about leaving our forwarding address; did you attend to it?"

"I figured it all out, Auntie," replied Patsy, "and decided we will not leave any trail here." Her quizzical look was not easy to interpret, and even Aunt Martha looked puzzled.

"Why, dear?" she asked. "Why shouldn't our mail be forwarded?"

"Oh, well, you see, Auntie," and Patsy assumed great indifference, "these people might allow letters to lie around, and it's much easier to just notify the few friends who may write soon, and have all other mail forwarded from home. In that way there will be no danger of losing personal letters."

This answer, though not entirely logical, seemed to serve, and it was not until they were on the Taunton train that Patsy found chance to tell Bee of her narrow escape.

"You see," she said. "I was determined not to leave any clue for those Drake girls to follow. If they find us they will be pretty clever. They never could possibly guess we would go in this direction, and I don't propose being pestered with them. Later, when Beth can visit, we want her to have a nice, comfortable, quiet time with us."

"Beth?" repeated Bee. "What would we do about Torry?" This was pure mischief, naturally.

"Leave him home with Aunt Abbie, of course," promptly replied Patsy. "But please heed me, Beatrice Forbes, and stop fooling! I have a letter" (she glanced around to make sure the others were not noticing), "a letter from those Drakes. It came this morning, and I have not had a chance to do more than glance at it, but even that glance —well, let's look. Here, we'll put it in this magazine."

They both read in silence. Little gasps of indignation escaped Bee, and Patsy's cheeks burned as her eyes scanned the poorly-written page. Finally the scrawl was entirely read, and Patsy, folding it away, slipped it back into her bag.

"What do you think of that?" she gasped.

"I think those girls are perfectly dreadful," replied Bee. "The idea of threatening us!"

"Torry expected that. But the idea of them saying he is a spendthrift, and that he only wants to sell that property to get money to squander! And he is so good to his sister! I suppose it's all pure, common jealousy."

"And what was that about no danger of the place being sold? Didn't you think there was some hidden meaning in that?"

"They wanted us to tell that back to the Brandons, of course," replied Patsy. "And, I sup-

pose, they hoped we would conclude that some mysterious power is operating to keep the place vacant in these busy times. It's a wonder they don't know it is already rented."

"You're mistaken there, Pat. She said it could not be *sold,* as no one would ever buy the spooky old place. Don't you know she said even the agents were sick of it?"

"The whole scrawl is such a jumble it is rather difficult to know just what is intended, beyond the outstanding fact that we—you and us—are to keep our hands out of it. No one could mistake that. I don't think it wise to tell the others; do you?"

"No, Mab might have a bad dream," suggested Bee. "Somehow the serious turn of things seems enough for our wise heads," her voice apologized for the seeming egotism. "Tuck the letter away for future reference. Next station is ours, isn't it?"

"Yes, and let me help Aunt Martha, personally. If she loses anything, I prefer to take the blame," and Patsy hurried to secure the belongings of her aunt from the overhead car rack.

Mrs. Sherman and Rolly were at the station, Rolly bright and smiling, under a big-brimmed straw hat of old-fashioned farmer sun-down type.

His gingham blouse opened over a newly sunburned chest, and his cheeks were at least two shades deeper red. The country had already done its best at initiating Rolly, but he seemed to like that line of hazing pretty well, judging from his beaming acknowledgement.

Mrs. Sherman fluttered around as if she owned not only the station but the railroad as well, and she showed rare efficiency in ordering old Caleb Trimble about, as he put the baggage into his open depot wagon. She then insisted that Rolly ride along with him to make sure he went direct to the place with the luggage.

A bit dazed, the Wayfarers waited for the little woman to hail another driver who sat on the "throne" of a three-seated carry-all, and into this our friends merrily climbed.

It was a new experience for them to come under a manager, but Mrs. Sherman's activity would be insulted by any lesser term.

The girls folded their hands and rocked bodily in rhythm of pure joy. To "lay back and enjoy life" was the real thing after all. Aunt Martha asked no anxious questions, a sign of her complete satisfaction with the capable Mrs. Sherman.

They were driven up, on a semi-circular drive-

way, one end leading in, and the other out from the homestead, no matter which end was chosen for either. The porch also had that kind of steps—up and down—to a central platform that made a really charming little stage overlooking the long-terraced lawn.

The house itself was of the regulation old homestead type, two and a half stories, conservatively built, with just enough windows to give just enough light to the rooms and one (again central) little portico on the second floor. The exactness of all these central provisions proclaimed equal lines of carefully-measured proportions within, and struck the eye with a primness essentially New England, or New English, as the Wayfarers expressed it.

As they stepped on the porch, the front door was thrown open by an elderly servant, who wore spic-span blue-jeans in lieu of the butler's white linen coat; but there was no mistaking his smile of welcome; that was no substitute.

"This is Abijah," Mrs. Sherman introduced. "We always call him Bijah for short."

"So will we," replied Patsy, with a smile intended to match Bi's, while the others murmured appropriate greetings.

Then began the interesting survey Patsy had

so counted upon, and it lacked nothing of the surprise-charm she anticipated.

Rag-carpeted rooms, spotted with brilliant-colored, hand-braided rugs, old-fashioned furniture, "high-boys," with the accompanying broad, generous dressers, big enough to put bed clothing in the deep spacious drawers. Rush-bottomed chairs, corner stands and "toilette sets," everything bespoke the vanished glory of a well-ordered home.

"And where are all the folks?" asked Nellie, surprised that all this should survive the family unit.

"Gone," said Mrs. Sherman simply, but she followed the word with a sharp glance shot at Patsy and Bee. She was plainly trying to attract their especially attention.

"May I room with Aunt Martha?" asked Mabel. "These are such big, long rooms, and the beds are so monstrous!"

"For a while," condescended Patsy, who was regarded as chief of the Wayfarers. "If you wish, both you and Nell may take this big room with the two double beds, and if auntie wants to be prefect of the dormitory she may assume that office. Perhaps, until we get used to the place, that plan would be best."

"And here we are, Pat," called Bee from another room, running back of that which was chosen for the younger girls. While this front had the advantage of the little dove-cote portico, that which Bee was claiming boasted of a large, circular bay window that leaned far out into the group of elm trees.

"Lunch will be ready as soon as you are ready for it," announced Mrs. Sherman, and an appetizing odor, stealing up to greet the guests, attested the reliability of her promise.

And such a meal as it turned out to be!

Soup, with fresh garden carrots and little new turnips cut in strips that saved their identity, cabbage served in tiny individual heads, or hearts, and as different from the usual as is beef tenderloin from beef otherwise, potatoes of an entirely different flavor from the city-used product, lettuce crisp and dainty, with homegrown tomatoes in the nests. To know such a feast is to know the luxury of fresh vegetation, and even a short distance from farm to market or country store materially affects this perfection.

"How long, or short, have all these been gathered?" asked Patsy in appreciation.

"This morning," replied Mrs. Sherman, hap-

pily. "The garden is doing beautifully this year. Wait till you try our berries!"

"Berries!" chorused the girls significantly.

When the glass dish was carried in—it was not cut glass but sparkled for all of that and the red of the berries shone through it—there was another delighted exclamation.

"Rolly wants me to tell you this is his picking," said Mrs. Sherman proudly, while a chorus of "ohs" applauded.

Cream—but why torture with envy for the feast? The reality can only be confirmed by a similar opportunity. Have you ever had a real, live, working, thriving all-around vegetable and fruit garden in your back yard?

No? Then you are not of the elect.

"Glad you came?" queried Patsy from the joyous throng at the feast.

"This is really country life!" declared Aunt Martha.

And they ate and rejoiced, but when the feast was finished Mrs. Sherman had something important to say to Patsy, and she made chance to whisper that she would like to speak to her alone.

CHAPTER XIX

WILDACRES THE MYSTERIOUS

"RUN along and explore," suggested Patsy to her companions. "I'll talk things over with Mrs. Sherman, and present you with a working programme shortly. Don't eat green apples, don't touch poison ivy, don't climb cherry trees—the limbs always break; don't——"

"Don't worry," concluded Bee, offering the initial number of the promised programme. It was a pink and white sunbonnet, and made a tremendous hit.

Mrs. Sherman beckoned Patsy into the little sitting room off the end of the long hall. A quaint rocker was still in place, and foot-stools told a reminiscent story.

"Miss Carroll," began Mrs. Sherman. "I felt I should tell you all about this place, first thing."

"Yes, I think that's the best way to start," agreed Patsy brightly.

"Well, this is not the house I wanted at first."

"I remember you told us that," Patsy said by way of assistance.

"Yes, I know," faltered Mrs. Sherman, showing some uneasiness, "but I didn't tell you all about this. You see there are so many places all over Massachusetts with queer stories attached to them, that I felt it would be foolish to suppose you would care about the yarns attached to this."

Patsy smiled her complete indifference to any fear, but showed some interest in the yarns.

"I'll make it as short as I can, but it always seems a long story to me because I suppose it has meant a lot to us," began Mrs. Sherman. "You see, the house where I worked with my dear husband, is just over through that grove. We used to call it Toptowers, because it has a tower that tops over everything around; and this," indicating the surrounding premises, "was called Wildacres on account of the big piece of land with it, a little wild here and there, you know.

"The owners of both these places were like brothers to each other, although they were in no way related," went on Mrs. Sherman, "but when the families married, and some died, and others

moved away, the two old men just kept these houses up to the top-notch and were satisfied with each other's company, except, of course, when some of their families visited back. Well, as sometimes happens, both the men died within the same year, and my employer, Samuel Toppin, went first. His life-long friend, Seymour Larkin of this place, was always his adviser in everything legal, and when I found we couldn't get Top-towers for you, I just was foolish enough to hope we might find some clue to the will of Mr. Toppin over here," she finished, a note of confession in her voice.

"You mean the clue that would fulfill your hopes for the little home you expected out here?" asked Patsy, considerately.

"Yes," faltered Mrs. Sherman, "it may be a weakness in me, but I suppose we are apt to follow a weakness where it may serve to benefit ourselves. I have planned, always, to have Rolly grow up out here," she explained eagerly, "and it sickens me to think of keeping him in that awful city."

"Might Mr. Larkin, of this place, have papers belonging to your Mr. Toppin?"

"More than likely," declared Mrs. Sherman. "They always worked together, and that big desk

there," indicating the combination black walnut bookcase and desk, "saw many a plan made. Sam and Seymour, they called Mr. Larkin Morry, spent hours and days writing and drawing plans, and concocting schemes. They were not old men, but Morry was disabled from rheumatism; that took him off. My employer, Mr. Toppin, went from pneumonia the same year. It was that dreadful winter two years ago."

"Yes, I remember it," said Patsy. "And I suppose we girls will have something very interesting to do in searching for your clue," she promised eagerly. "We have done something like that before, and I assure you we just love to play we're real sleuths—detectives, you know."

"Oh, I've looked every place," said Mrs. Sherman with a sweeping glance that included the old desk. "I've given that idea up, there's no favorable clue here, and now I wonder, should I have brought you here through such a selfish motive?"

"Why, we are perfectly delighted with the place. It is beyond our wildest dreams," declared Patsy. "You don't need to worry on that score."

"It isn't exactly that" (Mrs. Sherman looked unaccountably ill at east), "but you see, it's the *reputation* this place has," she finally managed to say.

"Reputation?" repeated Patsy.

"Yes, Miss Carroll. Not that I believe in a bit of it, and if anyone ought to know these places I should, but I have to admit I have been a little scared myself, since I came in here."

"Scared! Of what?"

"That's it," and she smiled uncertainly. "It's hard to say just what. Old Bi is the soul of honesty, and there are surely no tricks about that he has any hand in. I know an honest old man when I see one, and no one can say anything against Abijah. I would trust him as I know his master always did. He's kept on here now because Morry Larkin provided for it in his will," she explained.

"I see," said Patsy, listening with one ear to Mrs. Sherman's disclosures and with the other to the call coming from Mab and Bee out in the garden.

"But there is really nothing to be frightened of," insisted Mrs. Sherman unreasonably. "I've been here a week now, and while I'll own I can't always sleep, I haven't really seen anything——"

"What did you *hear* then?" asked Patsy, trying to discover the cause for suspicion.

"Well, I heard loud noises——"

"If that's all," interrupted Patsy, "don't wor-

ry that they'll affect us. And please, Mrs. Sherman, don't say anything to the others."

"I won't, indeed. That's why I asked you to come in here. Every girl isn't blessed with your kind of common sense——"

But Patsy smiled away the proferred compliment.

"You don't know the other girls as well," she interrupted. "Just you wait, Mrs. Sherman, until we all get a chance to run down your wild noises! Just give us a week——"

"Patsy!" called Mabel sharply, "do come out here! Whatever is keeping you?"

"Coming," agreed Patsy; while Mrs. Sherman sighed in relief, evidently glad to have unburdened herself of that much, at least, of Wildacre's story.

Outside, the Wayfarers were wildly enthused over the country's enchantment. No wonder the table had been laden with such marvelously fresh, luscious fruits and vegetables! Directly back of the house was a small lawn, then a little "kitchen garden," and, back of that again, were spread out the Wildacres, gently sloping hills unrapt in the sunshine, and refreshed from the musical little brook that teased its way along, happy as if the world had been made for its playground, and en-

tirely indifferent to the value of its own miraculous irrigating power.

Bijah, the utility man, had explained how the place had always been worked "on shares," the man "sharing" doing the work, and providing the seed for planting, while the owner was accorded half the crops for the use of the land.

Aunt Martha could scarcely speak, she was so delightfully surprised with the place. Her misgivings (and she had them seriously) were entirely obliterated in the splendid prospects ahead.

"We might have been here all summer," she all but complained to Patsy, both of them now inspecting the berry-patch.

"But we couldn't have done New England by just settling here," the latter reminded her. "And you know, Auntie, dearie, we girls are expected to learn, learn, and learn. Then, I suppose, we may die if we choose, just so long as we learn enough to die with."

Her aunt laughed, and gathered a spray of red raspberries that would have made a perfect pattern for my dainty china set. The leaves of powdered green lay like tiny plates under each cluster of the most fragile of fruits, and even the thorns were soft as rubber, as they picked their way along the swaying stems.

"We will surely be very happy here, my dear," said Aunt Martha. "I only wish your father could join us at once."

"So do I, but you know dad; always finding an excuse and more most important business. We are lucky if we see him by the middle of the month. But isn't old Bijah splendid? And Mrs. Sherman?"

"Both splendid, indeed," replied Aunt Martha with genuine enthusiasm. "Rolly has been showing us his treasures. He has a pet turtle, some kittens and——"

"A dog?"

"No, he says no dogs are allowed. It seems the owner, who died a few years ago, was most particular about dogs, and Bijah will not allow any upon the place since the master left it. I'm rather glad. Dogs make so much noise, and often do such unaccountable things, like howling at the moon. I must confess it is unpleasant to my ears to hear a dog howl out in the still, midnight hours."

Patsy made a little peck at the soft, sensitive cheek, and hurried away to view the wonders the other girls had discovered. She answered every demand for admiration, declared Rolly's turtle must belong to some remote age, beyond the time

allotted to man's inhabitance of this earth; she never, in all her life, saw prettier kittens than the tiger and the tortoiseshell, and the only thing lacking seemed to be a dog.

Rolly also thought this was a serious lack, and told Bijah so, but the old man shook his head.

"No more dogs around here, since Mr. Morry's gone. He had 'em and they were real dogs; knowin' and intelligent, but we have 'nough of things around here now without strange dogs," he insisted. Patsy suspected "the things" included those mentioned by Mrs. Sherman, but she only smiled indulgently at little Rolly.

"Wait until you come out to visit us," she promised, "then you'll see *real* dogs. Mabel and Eleanor have the most beautiful little French poodle, and I have a great big collie named Chief. He's a beauty, you'll be sure to love Chief."

"Yes'm," agreed the affable boy, with a grin that was all Rolly.

"Do you just love it out here?" Nell asked him.

"Yes'm, and Mom said I could take you to the pond-lilly place as soon as you're rested," he offered shyly.

"Pink ones?" joked Bee.

"No'm, yellow an' white, and Tippy is all right now, too. The pink all wore off."

"Oh, yes, we forgot to ask for Tippy," confessed Patsy. "Is she the mother of these baby kittens?"

"Yes'm. We gave two away; one black and one mixed."

"But none of them pink," persisted Bee. "Well, I'm sure you ought to have well-behaved kittens, you take such good care of them."

"And I have three ducks and some chickens, too," declared Rolly, proudly.

"Think of that! Lot's better than Boston to be out here," commented Patsy, "and we are sure we are going to like it quite as well as you do."

At that moment Patsy wondered!

Was she deceiving the girls, to hold that secret of Wildacres' unfavorable reputation? Should she gather them all on the big front porch, and tell the thrilling tale—what she knew of it?

No force of scruples could dictate that uncertain course, and it was to tell Bee, and abide by her advice, that she finally decided.

So the first night at Wildacres fell safely over their innocent heads.

Wildacres—what had it in store for the Wayfarers?

CHAPTER XX

TRICKS OF A "GUILTY" CONSCIENCE

DURING all that evening Patsy found no opportunity to tell the story to Bee. First everyone wanted to go down to the post-office, although no one could possibly expect any mail. Quickly as Nell overheard the girls who were passing talk of going down, she insisted that the Wayfarers fall in line.

Never before had they enjoyed this particular sort of rural excitement. The post-office was situated behind a tiny window in the general store, and who could guess what went on behind the patch of wood that slid up and down, at the will of some powerful potentate who might hand out good news or bad or none at all?—It was all thrilling in an entirely new and novel way.

Young folks, evidently of the summer-boarder variety, giggled and acted very foolish over mere colored post-cards, while young men in last year's

Palm Beach suits, seemed unduly important upon receiving, through the little window, anything from book ads. to a shaving cream sample—just so long as something was received.

The thin little parade afforded the girls no end of merriment, and Bee declared that one young swain, deferential enough and by no means flirtish, dropped a letter and a bag of peanuts from sheer surprise when Mab glided by in her pink and white organdie.

How much the arrival of the evening mail meant to the Berryton country folks, all this did not sufficiently demonstrate, for even the charms of a dignified river, with its pretentious craft for summer outings, could not compete with that elemental, fascinating arrival of the evening mail.

"We must get letters," insisted Patsy. "Else we will never amount to anything out here. Even Rolly got one—I saw him capering off with it—and there goes the maid who swept the big porch, three estates beyond Wildacres—she got slews of mail, and here we are——"

"Did we forget to leave our forwarding address?" asked Nellie.

"Dear child! Do you realize we only left Plymouth this morning?" asked Bee.

"I didn't, really, it seems so long ago. But do

you know Mrs. Sherman has promised to open the piano for us, and it hasn't been opened since the owner died? Do you think it's perfectly all right to use it, Pat?"

"Of course, why not? We are merely tenants and not supposed to know anything about the former owner; in fact we do know very little. The place is rented through a hard-hearted agent, and we are privileged to be equally callous. I am even counting on finding some music so old—so old it will be written in old English."

"Don't you think it is going to be lovely out here?" put in Mab. "Just hear those things croak."

"Frogs! Nice little, slippery green frogs," said Bee. "Some evening we'll take Rolly and go frogging. It's lots of fun to see them duck as they hear the slightest noise along the water's edge."

"Like some old folks," commented Patsy. "They want to make all the noise themselves. Do we take guns when we go frogging, Bee?"

"No, indeed. I wouldn't harm the poor Bullies. Just play we are after them with pebbles and pine cones."

"Why do farmers build their sidewalks up in the air like this?" asked Nellie, as they took a

rather steep grade up to the roots of two very crooked old trees.

"They don't," replied Patsy. "This is the way the earth grew, and the path is just made to follow the surface."

"But just look at that deep gutter! What keeps folks from walking off after dark?" and she stopped to look over the edge of the embryo cliff, rather dangerous looking even in daylight.

"I suppose feet get to know paths, just as fingers get to know piano keys," suggested Bee. "We can't call it by any better name than habit."

"No evening jaunt for me," decided the analytical Nell. "I should fancy bug-a-boos behind those trees, waiting to push me down into those rocky chasms; and there's broken glass in this one."

"Can't be too particular out in the country, my dear," Patsy reminded her. "You must eliminate the garbage man, the trash man, the superintendent of highways and, incidentally, the taxes that go to make up their salaries. You see, the law of compensation trails over these rocky roads, with the finger of justice skyward. Here we are, back home again, and no bones broken, however."

Aunt Martha was down at the front gate with

Mrs. Sherman as they came up. The evening was still young, and with the laughter of parties from nearby boarding houses (everyone appeared to keep boarders) there seemed little danger of acute loneliness, even to Patsy's suspicion-burdened mind.

"We must have some music this evening; I've promised Bijah," said Aunt Martha. "Come along, children, we are blessed with one advantage we never thought to inquire about, our house has electric lights."

"Oh, goody good!" exclaimed Patsy. "Just think, we never noticed the fixtures, and they might have been mere gas pipes."

"And not many places are wired along here," said Mrs. Sherman, "but Sam and Morrie were very keen on electricity. I used to be afraid to touch things when our place was first wired. Come along, do. There's Bi, in a fresh jumper, all ready for the concert."

The lights were switched on, each button now assuming the importance of a real luxury, and they entered the long, old-fashioned parlor, still heavy with the odor of long imprisoned air, in spite of Mrs. Sherman's vigorous and daily airings for the past week.

Here again was that "indescribable quaint-

ness," mottoes and brilliantly-hued pictures on the walls, portraits of family folks, including a little girl and boy, evidently brother and sister, primly posed with chubby arms around each other's neck, a bride with her roses held aloft and a real lace handkerchief showing conspicuously in the hand that did not hold the roses, besides there was a very determined visage, that of a man with a neatly trimmed beard, his hair combed high over a very high forehead, his hands clasped in a straight line from coat pockets to white vest pockets, and then the tall boots that came to the knees and opened into very generous gauntlets; this surely had been the master of the house.

"That's the owner, Mr. Larkin," explained Mrs. Sherman, seeing Patsy scrutinizing the big gold framed portrait, "wasn't he a fine-looking man?"

"Indeed he was," agreed Patsy, but a call from Bijah for Mrs. Sherman prevented her from pointing out the bride, the children, the graceful big white horse, besides other pictures surely important in their connection with Wildacres.

Aunt Martha found a favorite musical composition, and although it was of the "Evening Bells" style, with dainty little notes afloat in the

air far beyond staff limitation, Patsy agreed to "try it."

Bijah was back at the parlor door to hear the second, if not the very first, note struck, and his pleasure fully repaid Patsy for her heroic attempt to force music from the rusty strings. The other girls each essayed to try their skill, and incidentally Rolly was heard to chime in on "Smiles," all the way from the kitchen, he having refused an orchestra or balcony seat in the parlor.

"It must sound like it," commented Bee, for she had applied the "Smile notes" to the keyboard and thus produced the satisfactory result.

So the evening went, and it was surprising how many things of interest were discovered in the old place.

"We could never be lonely here," again said Patsy.

"Why, Patsy Carroll!" exclaimed Mab. "Why do you keep staring at walls, and squinting at windows, and declaring we could never be lonely? Do you harbor some sinister threat or fear of things hereabouts?"

Patsy laughed gaily, then laughed again reflectively. Wasn't it uncanny that even Mab should thus read her thoughts? Like all other people surprised in action, Patsy found it con-

venient to attribute the discovery to "uncanny insight," whereas her own continued comment had very plainly betrayed her.

She did a funny little dance right in the rose wreath of the parlor rug, to allay Mab's suspicion.

"I always worry about you, Mabsie," she teased, "but not after the first night—and besides you are going to cuddle in the dormitory."

Twice Bijah went to the front door in answer to sounds that seemed to come from the porch, as if someone were calling on the new arrivals, but each time he returned alone, and each time he critically inspected the long shutters on the French windows, to make sure they were securely fastened.

"Those windows," whispered Aunt Martha to Bee, "always make me feel unsafe. They are so like big doors without the door protections."

"Oh, don't mind Bijah's solicitude," replied Bee. "I have always noticed caretakers have the habit of perpetually looking things over. There probably isn't the slightest reason for it—he just must keep a-lookin'."

"What's that?" asked Nellie, as a squeaking and unusual racket proceeded from the direction of the kitchen.

This was a signal for all hands to investigate, and when they did they found Rolly in the kitchen, struggling to teach his pet duck house manners.

"There's a dog prowling 'round," he insisted to Bijah's protestations, "and I can't leave Goldie out there to be chewed up."

He held a big part of the goose in his two short arms, but the rest of it flopped around "regardless."

"But, my dear child," insisted Mrs. Sherman, "we cannot keep the duck in the house all night. You must fetch him back to the pen."

"I can't, Mom," pleaded the boy, his voice shaky. "I saw the dog under the hedge, and I heard Goldie squawkin' and I know he was after him. I'll put him under the clothes basket and put weights on top." He was "shooting" his words over the aviation tactics of Mr. Goldie Ducklet, with a rather disconnected result.

"Suppose we take a lantern and go inspect?" suggested Patsy. "Then we can make sure everything is safely shut up——"

"All right," agreed Rolly reluctantly. He had better grace than to oppose his benefactor, although he was plainly worried about the duck,

with the golden-shaded neck-band strung on silky feathers.

Mrs. Sherman seemed relieved at this solution of the problem. A duck under the clothes basket, plainly, did not appeal to her housekeeping sense. It was very dark out under the grape vines, and the lantern was very stingy with its light. Mab and Nell risked the uncertainty of big lilac trees behind which they hid until the lady with the lantern—to wit Patsy—came along, then they pounced out with that "terrifying" result girls so love to achieve.

Patsy jumped and shouted obediently, and each little squeal of terror had in it more for her than the others guessed.

What if someone was really lurking about, and had this chance to observe them as victims?

Answering the secret suspicion she suddenly burst into a merry song about "Smoking a Meerschaum Pipe," and doing otherwise very brave, if unwarranted, stunts.

"We'll have to put him in the cow-shed," declared Rolly. "That can be shut tight and the coop can't."

"All right," agreed the leader. "Which is the cow-shed?"

"Back of the barn, in this way through the

gate." He didn't relax his hold on Goldie, however, for the sake of opening mere gates, so Nell helped him out.

Every step they took led them deeper into the darkness.

"Our eyes are city struck," remarked Bee. "I'm as blind as a bat."

"And I feel as if I were going to crash my head against some unseen barrier, every step," explained Mab. "We must, indeed, have city eyes."

"My lantern makes me the wise virgin," proclaimed Patsy, waving aloft the ray of light.

"There's a stick in the latch," said Rolly, referring to the fastening on the door of the cowshed. "You just got to pull it."

The door opened as Mab pulled the latch-string, and then there was a wild swoop——

"Mercy!" cried everyone.

"That's him!" insisted Rolly. "That's the big dog, I seen his head. Look-ed him run!"

"A dog, that size!" exclaimed Patsy. "He almost knocked me down."

"Don't let's go in there!" begged Nell. "The place may be full of beasts." She had jumped to the possible safety of a wood pile and the sticks were tumbling down under her weight.

"Naw, they's no more," insisted Rolly, "an' I've got a nice basket of straw in there for Goldie. I've got to get it."

"'Course you have," chimed in Patsy. "And who's afraid of old, stray dogs!"

"Guess he knew Bi would shoot him if he caught him," ventured the boy, stretching a point on the "shootin'" to suit the emergency. "I saw that dog crawl in here to-day and he's a lovely big dog—if only Bi would let me keep him?"

"How do you suppose he got shut in here?" asked Patsy, scenting collusion.

"Don't know. But Jed Sims might do it. He knows I don't dast keep dogs."

"Who's Jed?" Patsy had swung the lantern in the far corner of the shed and Rolly had hold of the straw-lined nest for Goldie.

"Oh, he's a feller. Thinks he's smart and plagues Bi. But he better jest wait 'till I ketch him lockin' dogs in our barn!"

"He better had," chirped Nell, now close beside the lantern and almost under Patsy's arm. "You just wait until we get hold of this here Jed. We'll scalp him!" threatened Nell.

"Oh, will y'u? Will y'u help me give it to 'm? I would jest like to give 'm a good lickin'. He's

so fresh an' such a smartie," declared Rolly savagely.

He put the squeaking Goldie deep down in the nest, turned another peach basket upside down for a cover, and on top of that set an old iron pot, used, it seemed, for sick animals to drink out of.

"You see," explained Rolly, "we don't use this shed 'ceptin' for sick chickens an' things like that. I guess Jed knew I'd come here to-night, and he thought that dog would scare me to death. But if I c'u'd 'a' kept him he'd never see his dog Rover again."

"Never mind," consoled Patsy, "we'll see what we can do to talk Bijah over. You really would have good times with a big dog on a place like this."

She wondered if the malicious Jed could be implicated in the disturbances Mrs. Sherman spoke of? And further she hoped he was a boy who would not be difficult to keep track of.

CHAPTER XXI

SYLVAN SOLITUDE

"BEE, don't you dare go to sleep until I talk to you," warned Patsy, prodding her companion who had rolled so far over in the big bed that she had to roll over herself to reach her. "I've had a guilty conscience all the afternoon, and I'm not going to sleep on it."

"Patricia Carrollesque!" exclaimed Bee, coming face upward. "You alarm me! A guilty conscience torturing you! Out with the guilt, my ears are ready!"

"Of course, it isn't anything I've done," explained Patsy needlessly. "It's something I've heard, and I've violated a Wayfarer rule by keeping it all to myself," she admitted.

"Not such an awfulness, dear, and with it you have a treat in store for me, so why worry? What's the great big secret?"

"Mrs. Sherman confided in me directly after we got here. She admitted this old place has a rather unsavory reputation," began Patsy.

"How so? Not a den of thieves or anything like that?"

"No, nothing criminal; that is, she knew of nothing really wrong about the place, and she ought to know because her former employer, deceased, and the owner of this place, deceased, were life-long friends."

"Isn't this the very place where Mrs. Sherman used to live? I thought that was the main idea."

"No, dear, it isn't. Mrs. Sherman lived over at the Toptowers; that's the place with the big cupola on the tower—the next estate, you know. And this is where Mr. Toptower's friend lived," explained Patsy.

"Oh, I see, rather complicated. But the secret, Pat, dear? What about our homestead's ill reputation?"

"The usual string without the spindle—that's one of my own. Mrs. Sherman says this place ought to be sold while the market is up; that many people want it and the heirs want to sell it, according to the agent; but the folks hereabouts succeed in scaring every prospective buyer off before a deal can be put through."

"How do they do it?" demanded Bee.

"Seems there is a reason, and to-night when we found the strange dog locked in the barn, I just wondered could that be part of a scheme to scare us out?"

"I won't scare two cents' worth," insisted Bee. "This is altogether too comfortable and cozy. Just smell those roses at your window, and inhale the honeysuckle perfume! No, indeedy, Pat Carroll, I'm going to stay here, dogs, boys or ghosts to the contrary," and a sudden turn caused the springs of the bed to sort of encore this outspoken resolve.

"You don't imagine, Bee Forbes, that I am thinking of taking a scare or even a dare," demanded Patsy. "But you must allow that auntie has normal nerves, and the other girls were never exactly daring. You and I—ahem! Well, Beasey, let's see what happens. I've warned you now, so say your prayers carefully."

"Said! Also I am nice and clean, if I must die this night, and I've a good coat of cold cream——"

"Bee, stop! That's horrid!"

"What? Don't you believe in being neatly prepared?"

"Mrs. Sherman said she had heard things but

couldn't find the things," continued Patsy, ignoring Bee's preparations. "Oh, yes, I almost forgot to tell you this. She said her especial motive in fetching us here was to gain a chance to look for a clue to her supposed whereabouts from Sam Toppin—Mr. Toptowers, you know. I told her we would clean that little matter up in a week, but she insisted she had even taken up rugs, but no valuable papers are to be found."

"Why should they be here?"

"Bee, darling, your pardon. I'm talking backwards. I should have explained that the two old gents were so chummy, Toplofty always wrote his letters and drew up his papers over here on Morry's nice old-fashioned desk—the one in the sitting room. So it was reasonable for Mrs. Sherman to think the paper she craves is around these diggin's. It's a mere detail. You will find that, just as we did the will in the knapsack at Wilderness Lodge. Just give us a week or two and we'll clear up that little matter. Now, I think that will be about all. Suppose we call it a day? I'm dreadfully sleepy."

"Same here, and a day it is," agreed Bee. "Don't call me unless you are sure it's ghosts. Can't tell but Rolly may have more trouble with that precious duck of his."

"I know ducks from ghosts, Bee, and I'll be careful in the paging," said Patsy, whereat the bed springs creaked again agreement.

It was so still—not even the frogs broke the silence, and the tired Wayfarers slept, slept, slept; until bold sunshine broke its way in, and tantalized each girlish face that burrowed deeper into convenient pillows.

"Oh, h-h!" yawned Patsy. "I thought I was dead; never slept so soundly in all my life! Where are we?"

"Here," answered Bee, "just where we fell in last night. And Pat, didn't anything happen? Wasn't something due to happen?"

"The same question nags me," spoke Patsy, "but I can't just place it. What was scheduled to come?"

"Ghosts—don't you remember, we were expecting ghosts?"

"Ye'ah, and they didn't call. Better luck next time. But wasn't that a heavenly sleep? Wonder if there's a narcotic in honeysuckle? Smell it? U-um!" she breathed deeply. "That's better than it was last night, even."

"The dew draws out the fragrance," commented Bee. "Yes, it's heavenly."

They stretched deliciously, and looked over

the strange room, with that sense of novelty peculiar to the first awakening. It was a lovely old room, surely, the bed so roomy with its great tall posts, and the windows draped with vines left no need for mere stuff-made curtains.

"Hasn't it kept well? I wonder who lived here last?" asked Patsy.

"Why, the old gentleman, wasn't it?"

"I don't think so. It seems it has been rented with the buying privilege, but the tenants all get scared off. I am sure we are having a lovely time. If we wanted to buy I'd pay a deposit this very day," declared Patsy. "I never knew I was so tired, or that I needed the sort of sleep that came last night. That is enough to make any place valuable."

"But we have only had one night of it," Bee reminded her. "I do like it and feel, as you do, we are going to be greatly benefitted by such calm, but, Pat, we have scarcely given it a fair trial."

"That's so, of course, all the same I can't see what would be troublesome here. To change the subject, Bee, and then to change our positions for that of 'right about face and forward march' to the wash room. First: the subject. Do you realize that in keeping this address from the Ply-

mouth folks, for possible forwarding of truant mail, we have left no clue for the Brandons?"

"No! Really!"

"Really, no! You see, we were to go back the next morning, and were all so excited about finding Beth we never thought of this change. Once or twice it did occur to me, but not wanting to refer to our disappointment in not getting their place, I thought it best not to touch the subject. Both Torry and Miss Abbie warned us, you know, not to speak of business to Beth. Miss Abbie told Aunt Martha they had even dismissed Beth's nurse, who had been with her a long time, just to cut down expenses. They expect to recall her, it seems, when the property business 'looks up,' as dad would say. I do hope Torry put through that deal he was so excited about," she finished.

"So do I," replied Bee quickly. "We may take a little of the honors if it turned out all right. There couldn't have been more than mere minutes to spare when that agreement was signed. But that was only something preliminary, wasn't it? Not a deed for the old place?"

"I understood it was for some small strip necessary in a factory site—I think a freight-run or something like that. But you see, it is very valu-

able to get a big enterprise in on the land. That always offers a chance for further development."

"Seems to me, Pat, your head is working pretty well this morning, considering the dead sleep you admitted. There, I hear the nursery stirring. When Mab and Nell laugh together they make a pretty duet of it; don't they?"

"Lock the door, bolt it, I mean, until I get partly dressed. Nell loves to try things on, and we haven't time for much nonsense this morning. I am just dying to get out and see things," declared Patsy, already free from boudoir cap and robe, and getting dressed to the point of outside garments.

"Do we bathe in the river, or lake, or ocean?" asked Bee, following Patsy's example.

"It's a river, but I believe, salty, and has a swift current, coming in from the bay, you know. Yes, we can bathe about eleven, which is rather fortunate as I haven't noticed any modern showers in Wildacres plumbing. There, let them in now. We can defy them."

The noisy bolt was shot back and the Perry girls literally tumbled in.

"How did you sleep?"

"Never woke up!"

"Aunt Martha wants to buy the place."

"Never knew what silence was before."

The duet of laughter had changed to one of exclamation, and the above snatches were given by Nell and Mab. They concluded by both jumping into the big, upset bed, to try it; to see if it could possibly be better than theirs.

A tap at the door interrupted the hilarity. It was Mrs. Sherman.

"Would you young ladies like to rest a little longer?" she asked smilingly. She evidently had also slept well. "I'd just as soon fetch you up a few berries and some coffee, and you might enjoy taking it easy after all your travelling," she suggested.

"Easy!" exclaimed Patsy. "Easier than this, Mrs. Sherman? Why, my dear lady, we have just been saying we never knew what solid comfort was before," Patsy exchanged a glance with the housekeeper, and received another in recognition.

"I'm so glad you slept well," said Mrs. Sherman. "It was very quiet last night."

"Isn't it always quiet?" asked Mab, sitting up and banging her towsled head against the bed post. "We hope it is, Mrs. Sherman."

"I hope it will be," she answered, and Patsy

laughed at the evasion. "Can't I bring you a bite——"

"No, indeedy," interrupted Patsy. "We are so charmed with the place, Mrs. Sherman, we wouldn't dare waste another glorious morning hour here. You might fetch Aunt Mattie a drink, if it isn't too much trouble. She would enjoy it, I'm sure. Just hand it to me at the back stairs, and please, Mrs. Sherman, don't fancy we expect you to wait on us. One worker in a house like this couldn't possibly serve trays."

The gingham-frocked woman smiled happily. "If you could know just what it means for us to be out here!" she said. "I can hardly keep Rolly indoors after daylight."

"And we are apt to follow his example soon," said Bee. "There is nothing like the first hours of the morning in a place like this. I must try some nature study work on these lazy girls, and we may have to be following butterflies pretty early."

The others were about to object, when a hammering of the brass door knocker interrupted.

"Bijah is gone away for the day," said Mrs. Sherman quickly. "I must answer. Who can that be, so early?" She hurried off to the front door, while the girls waited expectantly.

"Maybe it's the mean girls, come out to threaten us again," whispered Nell, foolishly.

"Maybe it's our baggage," said Patsy, sensibly.

"It's the agent," said Bee, decisively, "or someone to see about the house. Get into your duds quickly, he may want to inspect."

And that guess was not very far from the actual truth; but the inspection proved to be a little out of the ordinary.

CHAPTER XXII

A FULL DAY OF IT

WHEN Mrs. Sherman opened the front door, a man's voice, in angry tones, could be heard all over the old homestead.

"What do you suppose is the matter?" nervously asked Mab. She was farthest from being dressed and nearest the hall door.

"Listen," whispered Bee.

"Yes, of course," the strange voice was saying angrily. "It's all right to have it rented, and we ain't worried that folks'll want to stay long; but there's one provision in that will that must be carried out. Old Bijah has got to stay here as caretaker, if he's goin' to live out of the place."

"But he only went away for a few days," protested Mrs. Sherman, "and the man has business to attend to. He was waiting for these people to come before he went," she explained, her voice showing an effort to bring down the loud tones of the other speaker.

"You wouldn't stay here alone, eh?" and he cackled a very unpleasant laugh. "Can't say as I blame you. This here castle sure is haunted!" and he laughed again.

"Certainly I'd stay alone," declared Mrs. Sherman, indignantly. "Why shouldn't I?"

"You ought'er know. Well, let's see if old Bi's been attendin' to things. That clock up there wound?"

He made his way past the housekeeper, and could be heard mounting the stairs with a heavy step. The girls quickly shot the lock on their door, for the old clock, evidently that referred to, stood almost at the entrance to this big room, in an arch at the top of the staircase.

"Haunted!" exclaimed Mab, but her companion motioned for silence.

"Jest as I expected! That old fellar's been neglecting this. Where's thet key?" The disturber was fumbling around, and after groans and grunts expressive of his anger, he seemed to have found the key. He could now be heard winding tighter the rusty spring that creaked boldly in protest.

"When that feller comes back you tell him I said to keep that clock wound reg'lar—reg'lar, y'u understand? An' if he doesn't attend to

things I'll have him ousted by the court, that's what I'll do," snapped the intruder.

"Are you from the agent's office?" asked Mrs. Sherman quietly. She had followed him to the second floor.

"I am not from no agent's office! I'm chief heir to this property, and I intend to see that no meddlin' city folks spoils my plans. You used to live at Toppin's, didn't you?" he inquired.

"Yes, I did," faltered the woman. "Why?"

"Thought so! Then you've got fish ter fry, too!" (again the cackle). "Wish yer luck; but don't come meddlin' in *my* affairs; understand?" He tramped down the stairs again.

Mrs. Sherman must have understood, for the slam of the front door closed the question very emphatically.

A council of war followed quickly as the girls could come downstairs.

"I don't just know his name," explained Mrs. Sherman, her face still flushed from the excitement, "but I've seen him around here before. I know he is one of the heirs to this estate. But we won't pay any attention to him. I hope your aunt didn't hear him?" she suggested, anxiously.

"I don't think she did. A man's voice might mean a mere plumber, you know," suggested

Patsy. "But don't you think we should notify the agent that we don't care to be bothered with that style callers?"

"I just wouldn't say one word about it," replied Mrs. Sherman, cautiously. "He's the sort that has to blow off, and I guess he's about used up his blowing this morning. The idea of anyone complaining about poor old Bijah taking a few days off! And scolding about the old clock being run down! The idea! Why, it's better run down than ticking its heart out. I was glad when it stopped the other day."

"Well, we will try not to object to its ticking," said spokesman Patsy, "but we do object to strange winders. There's Rolly with fresh berries! Um-m-m! How delicious! Let's taste," and the big dish of red raspberries in Rolly's hands was immediately surrounded.

Following the morning's excitement, the day was simply crowded with fun. Bathing in Taunton River, off Dighton, afforded real novelty, and a trip in the afternoon, made by launch, to the famous Dighton Rock served as something more than interest, for the Wayfarers came upon a rather thrilling experience while attempting to inspect the ancient stone.

A party from Newport, two young girls and

two young men, were the other occupants of the launch which carried the Wayfarers, and the young men insisted the captain run his boat close along the world-famous rock.

"We want a squint at those hieroglyphics," ordered one. "They are said to have been made by the Norsemen in the tenth century, and we might be able to recognize the screed. Can't you run your boat up alongside?" he asked the captain.

"I can, of course," agreed the little man in the oil-cloth cap, "but there's a sand bar there, and no tellin' how we can come off it."

"Run in, anyhow," urged the other chap. "It means something to us at college to have seen that rock close-up."

So the launch "ran in." Coming close to the side of the big, flat stone, Bee wanted to follow the students and step out upon it, but the boatman objected.

"I wouldn't advise you to," he said. "There's a tide out here, and this boat ain't anchored. Better take a good look from where you are; it's safer."

Then something happened. The craft's keel grated harshly; there was a sudden jar, and for hours—mortal hours—those of the launching party couldn't do anything but look, for the boat

was promptly stuck on the dreadful sand bar!

Every bit of power possible was turned on, the engine was speeded to its limit, but the screw turned foamingly in the water, without budging the launch.

The captain was furious. He was missing boat-loads of passengers who waited far away on that river shore, eager for a chance to see Dighton Rock, and here he was marooned out on the sand bar, far even from the sight of land from the dock. On the other side of the water a forest could be seen, but no sign of help could be expected from that direction.

Failing to move the little launch under her own power, the oars were used, the young men, whose insistence was responsible for the plight, gladly doing what they could to assist the irate boatman. But one over-vigorous thrust against the big rock splintered an oar, and left but one then available.

"Suppose one or two of us get out; would that help by lessening the weight?" asked one of the girls from Newport; and without waiting for any assurance, she sprang into the rowboat that trailed behind, and with pretence of indifference, cooly untied the rope.

In a moment she was drifting! First the mat-

ter was taken as a joke, and good-bye songs attempted, but the boatman failed to see the fun.

"Throw her that oar!" he shouted. "Can't you fools see there's a strong tide here?"

The oar was thrown, and it was snatched up by the now thoroughly-frightened girl. But what could she do with one oar?

"Oh, do something, quickly!" begged Patsy. "She's drifting farther away every minute!"

Quickly? That rowboat was going at the rate of a mere chip on the light waves; and the girl's companion in the launch was screaming in terror.

"Sue! Sue!" she shouted. "Try to turn! Try to get back!" but the girl in the boat was helpless.

All were standing tense and anxious, when suddenly one of the young men tossed aside coat and cap and plunged into the water.

Suspense gripped everyone and not a word was uttered as he pulled through that current, stroke by stroke, and at last was beside the rowboat.

What a relief to see him climb in! At least the girl would not be carried away alone and helpless, although he seemed almost as powerless as she, but, strive as he would, the young man

could not force his way back with that one inadequate oar.

The boat was swirling and whirling, and it was too evident no progress could be made in returning. Then it drifted on rapidly toward the bay.

"We have got to get out to them," insisted the captain, "and we can't move until the tide turns." Again he opened wide the throttle, until the young man remaining in the launch jumped to the engine and pushed the angry skipper aside.

"Do you want to blow us up?" he shouted.

"Oh, mercy," whimpered Mab. "If we only could get back to shore!"

"We will, presently," appeased Bee. "The tide is turning now."

How another hour was spent watching the rowboat drift farther away, with the occupants shouting back and forth, may be imagined, and it was almost dark when the little launch jerked, then rocked, and finally floated out into the water.

What a relief!

Straight for the drifting boat the captain steered, but with poor grace, for the best part of the afternoon's business had been lost in the long delay.

But those from Newport seemed to forget his

loss quickly in the rescue of Sue and her companion, while the Wayfarers voiced something of their own anxiety for the unwarranted delay.

Aunt Martha and Mrs. Sherman were down at the dock, when the launch with the excited party returned.

"Rolly insisted you were out on the bar," said the housekeeper quickly as they landed, "but the boats were all so busy with the excursionists we couldn't get anyone to go out. But you are all safe and sound, thank goodness! and I guess you will all remember the famous Dighton Rock."

"We surely will," declared Nell. "It's a wonder we got back alive. The little boatman was so angry——"

"Hush," whispered Patsy, "make a lark of it, Nell. We don't want to frighten Aunt Martha so she will put up the bars. We saw Dighton Rock, at any rate," she finished aloud. Then they hurried and caught the trolley back for Berryton.

The evening flew quickly enough, with a porch call from a squeaky-voiced little woman who introduced herself as Mrs. Silas Tibbs, and betrayed herself as a village gossip. She knew everyone and everyone's parents, declared that Wildacres was "haunted," and some folks said it was "all account of Morrie Larkin settin' such store by a

dumb animal; a little black and white dog he cared more fer than a human bein'."

During a very trying monologue, Mrs. Sherman vainly endeavored to keep Mrs. Silas Tibbs from hissing her story into the ears of Aunt Martha, and the gossip was stopped only by the fortunate interruption of Rolly. He came rushing out with a fight all ready to pile upon Jed, "who was fetchin' his big dog around to scare the chickens and ducks," this threat to be a "good lickin'," and said fight to be administered by Rolly, no matter what his mother said. This alone served to divert the garrulous Mrs. Silas from the subsidized story.

The girls followed Rolly around to the arena, that chosen being the cow-shed, but, on arrival, no Jed nor dog was to be found.

"He's the meanest fellow," declared the gasping Rolly. "Always lookin' for a fight when we have company! But I'm sick of his blowin', an' I'm just goin' to punch his nose fer him first time I see him," declared the angry youngster.

"Punch it fer me," egged on Patsy. "I'll bet it will do him good."

And when they returned to the porch the unwelcome caller had taken herself off.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ALARM

"OH, what was *that?*"

"Oh, my! What *was* it?"

Patsy and Bee were sitting bolt upright in bed, but neither felt like moving to the electric-light button.

Again there was a sudden and terrifying bang!

"That must be a door or a window," whispered Patsy. "Could it be the wind?"

"There is a light wind but it is not strong enough for that. Hark! The girls are calling!"

"Mrs. Sherman!" came a startled cry. It was Mabel's voice.

"I'll turn on the light," volunteered Patsy. "We must quiet the girls."

A few moments after the alarm "all hands" gathered in Aunt Martha's room; even Mrs. Sherman and Rolly, who came in answer to the call.

"We often heard it before," the small boy insisted, but the wide-eyed terror he struggled to smile through did not indicate any the less fear for all of that.

"In which room is it? Where does the sound come from?" asked Patsy. It was no longer possible to suppress the facts of some real disturbance, for several times the old house echoed with a slam and a bang! And the hour was that of dead midnight.

"The room on the wing," replied Mrs. Sherman. "I never go in there except to lock things up."

"Was it locked last night?" asked Aunt Martha. She was trembling visibly, and had one arm around Mabel and the other around Nell. Both girls were on the verge of tears.

"Yes, I tried the door directly after Bijah left this morning. No one could possibly get in there."

"It's all quiet now," said Patsy. She was not indifferent to the fright, but was at the same time curiously interested. "Shall we go look, Bee?" she asked.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," objected Aunt Martha, promptly. "I think we had best all just stay in here together until daylight."

"Oh, I'll go right off to my own room," offered Mrs. Sherman, although Rolly seemed to be enjoying the novel visit, now that the noise had really subsided. "I have heard the racket a number of times, and nothing else ever happened. It is just awful at first," and Mrs. Sherman tried to gather Rolly in her robe, although he was coolly inspecting such articles as could be reached without his actually parading out in his new blue and white pajamas.

"I would much rather have you near us," said Aunt Martha again. "Whatever the noise is, it comes from a human agency, and as we are alone to-night, I feel we had best keep together. Can't you and Rolly take the room that opens off of this?"

"Certainly, if you wish," replied Mrs. Sherman, "but I am sure there will be no further noise. It is always like that."

"Will Bijah be back to-morrow?" asked Nell with quick breath.

"I hope so—I believe he will have to be. That man who was here to-day was so angry about his leaving." Mrs. Sherman had opened the door between, and a light now shone in the other room.

"Have you any idea what it can be?" asked

Patsy, frankly. "Of course you have had everything looked over carefully?"

"Everything; and we cannot find out what causes it. It seems always to come from the wing."

"That's where the old gentleman slept; wasn't it?" quavered Nell.

"Yes, he had his rooms over there, Bijah says. And we never use that part of the house. We don't need it," she qualified. Rolly was stored away in the big bed, and the door was just left open a crack, so voices could pass in and out from Mrs. Sherman's to the visitors' room.

"Queer," commented Bee. She seemed as calm as Patsy.

"Very," scoffed Mab, "and you two don't seem very much alarmed about it." She appeared to resent the fact.

"Why should we be?" asked Patsy. "We always find out these weird things are perfectly natural. It's just the finding out that's thrilling."

"You are right, my dear," said Aunt Martha. "But, somehow, we cannot get used to these terrifying things. For my part I shall be glad when daylight comes."

"And are we not to go back to quarters?" asked

Bee. She was describing a fairly good letter "S" in a big chair, and threatening to spoil the curves with a sudden slump to the floor.

"I should be simply paralyzed with fright if that sounded again," said Aunt Martha.

"That settles it!" declared Patsy. "We stay altogether, Bee. Just take this lovely, old red-and-white quilt."

"That's a Philadelphia Pavement," called out Mrs. Sherman. "Isn't it perfect?"

"Ye'ah," called back Patsy. "But the bricks are sort of square——"

"No, the bricks are the long, red strips," answered Mrs. Sherman. "We always call that the pavement."

But even the quaint old quilt failed to distract Mab and Nell, who refused to go back to their own bed and were now settling down, like two babies, under Aunt Martha's "wing."

"If you two are going to sleep there, we may as well turn in here," suggested Patsy. "Whew! What a whopper of a bed! Feathers, Bee, real feathers! Just try 'em, Beasy," and she was promptly submerged in a sea of softness.

After that the night fell back into silence, except for an occasional question whispered by Aunt Martha, and answered in the same tone by

Patsy or Bee. These related entirely to noise clues, but failed, absolutely, to even suggest a possible solution.

Why did the members of the household, Bijah and Mrs. Sherman, since her arrival, decide the noise must be accepted and not prevented?

It was over in the wing where the old gentleman, Seymour Larkin, kept his lonely quarters, and there was no one about the premises, no dogs, not even Jed's that Rolly held the grudge against, and yet the racket had been so stirring everyone in the house had heard it plainly!

With that fascination which is peculiar to genuine fright, each Wayfarer hugged her own fears in a tremulous breast, as she again lost consciousness in sleep; and when morning dawned only Mrs. Sherman and Rolly stole away to begin the day as usual; the others still slept on.

It was after breakfast, a very late function, indeed, to-day—that Patsy and Bee stole off to survey the wing. They found the door securely locked from the hall side, just as Mrs. Sherman said she left it, but the windows!

"There's the noise!" declared Patsy. "Those windows have been opened in the night!"

"Yes," agreed Bee, "they would never have

been left opened during the night; yes, those windows must have been opened, but how?"

"No way of reaching up here from any porches," said Patsy, surveying the building from a window. "See, this wing runs straight up over the dining-room, and there's no way of reaching it from the outside."

"And the furniture must have been all moved out," remarked Bee, glancing around at the singularly bare room in a homestead otherwise well furnished.

"Yes, Mrs. Sherman says they did that to remove all possibility of hiding places. Bijah told her one family were positive they would solve the mystery that way. They wanted to buy the place so badly, but were finally scared away."

"Isn't it queer?" reflected Patsy, poking her head into a long, low closet.

"Oh, look out, Pat!" warned Bee. "Don't be too rash. You might run into something!"

"No such luck!" retorted Patsy. "Nothing in here but old clothes and old cob-webs. Also there's a drawing-board, and a stand, and a lot of papers." She was calling off as she made her discoveries. "The old gentleman must have been something of a draftsman, or maybe an architect, there are so many drawing tools in here."

"But no noise-makers," said Bee.

"Not a snapper, nor a wire, nor a thing that could possibly be connected with a bang," declared Patsy, finally emerging from the dark closet.

"Come down and ask Mrs. Sherman about the windows," suggested Bee. "She may even be able to explain them."

But Mrs. Sherman had no explanation to offer.

"That's just the trouble," she declared. "I shut those windows and go in and find them wide open; then I leave them open and go in and find them tight shut. I'll tell you, young ladies, just keep out of the old room and let the noise bang. It can't hurt you, anyhow."

But this plan would never suit the Wayfarers. They intended to get to the bottom of the mystery, of course, and if necessary "set a trap for the ghost," or his accomplices.

"The very next time we hear that racket," proclaimed Patsy, when she and the others were gathered in the shade of the redolent grape arbor that afternoon, "we will just go straight to that room——"

"Oh-o-o!" screamed Mab. "Do you mean to say, Pat Carroll, that you would dare go into that

spooky room at night, with the noise all banging around?"

"I do and I shall," declared Patsy. "I know perfectly well it all comes from some natural cause, and while I am willing to admit it does make one's hair stand on end until we arrive at an explanation, I—well, I rather like it," she faltered. The admission brought a storm of protest upon her aforementioned head, and her companions all but charged her with a spookish conspiracy.

"Here's Bijah, back!" exclaimed Nell suddenly, real joy in her voice. "Was I ever so glad to see anyone? Come, let's meet him. Just see all the bundles——"

"Here's some mail for you young ladies," announced the returned gardener. He held a batch of letters and cards out in an overcrowded hand, and the girls quickly relieved him of that part of his burden.

"We are so glad to see you back again, Bijah!" exclaimed Mab. "This is a queer place, without a man around to keep things in order."

"Ain't it now?" he smiled. "And 'pears to me a man can't do much towards keepin' things straight, sometimes. Hope everythin's all right?"

"Oh, yes, all right," assented Patsy, running

her eyes over the mail. "But we are very glad to see you back, just the same. Isn't it nice to be so important?"

"Fine!" and he took his bundles kitchenward.

"Letters!" gasped Mabel. "All re-sent from home! That's why we haven't had much mail!"

"Yes, that's why," replied Patsy, evasively. "And here's one from the Cape—from Beth, I'm sure. All want to read it over my shoulder?"

"We can wait, thank you just the same," replied Bee. "In fact we have a few letters of our own." She waved quite a bunch of envelopes.

"So I see. Well, I'll take Aunt Martha hers first, then read mine, nice and quietly. I have a feeling we may learn something in this from our enemies, the Drake girls. I sort of dreamed of them last night."

"The Drake girls? How could we hear of them away out here? I mean, what could concern us about them away out here?" asked Mab.

"Can't tell," replied Patsy. "They seemed to be sort of travelling salesladies, and it might even occur that they should get a position down in the green grocery store. I can just imagine them sorting strawberries." But she ran off to find Aunt Martha before she opened the square envelope, stamped with the seal of Cape Cod.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SURPRISING DISCOVERY

A WEEK passed, and the weird noises had not again disturbed the tranquility of those "camping" at Wildacres. The stage had been "all set" according to Patsy, to expose the fraud and its perpetrators, whatever and whoever both might be, but nothing happened to warrant action.

All the joy of peace and quiet, which had so qualified the old homestead as an ideal resting place, returned with double-edged appreciation from the Wayfarers, although Patsy and Bee were secretly disappointed to be forestalled in their sleuthing.

They had Mrs. Sherman open all the windows in the wing room, and in the morning they would be found just as they had been left: again they would close them securely and likewise find them

closed: so that the alarm had all the earmarks of fraud, and was now just considered something to talk about.

In the big batch of delayed mail received when Bijah returned from his one day out of town, was one letter of especial interest. It was from Mr. Carroll and brought the good tidings of his proposed visit to Wildacres "about the middle of August," when he, with his old friend Judge Davis, whom the girls had run across on their visit to Plymouth, would take the important fishing trip; that, and no other form of exercise, would suffice for Robert Carroll.

Some days later came another piece of interesting mail. This was from Torrington Brandon and had inclosed a note from Beth. The young man reported his success in handling the business pertaining to the agreement for a property sale, made possible through the Wayfarers defeating the Drake girls in strategy, and thus obtaining the signature of Beth "in time to close a deal." Torry was briefly enthusiastic, but managed to betray a hope "that this would be an opening wedge to bigger things."

Beth's note betrayed something else. It was the fact of a slight relapse after her exciting experience in the imitation kidnapping, and a line

or two of extravagant praise for Patsy's and Bee's part in her rescue.

"You cannot possibly know what it meant to us," she wrote, "and I am only beginning to guess what noble sacrifices Torry has been making for his afflicted but hopeful sister."

She continued to tell of a change for the better in her condition, and finished with a direct protest against the girls' hiding.

"Why had they not left their address? And why did she have to send this letter all the way around through New York?" Beth asked.

Upon receipt of this Patsy hastened to make amends. How the oversight occurred was easy to explain, and the reason for delay in rectifying it was the probability of mixup and further delay. Bee it was who had advised waiting for the Brandon letter and then sending a direct reply. A letter was obviously due, and it did arrive as per schedule, so it was now time to reply.

The designing Patsy had another thought in mind, however. If this old haunted house business could be disposed of, she reasoned, there was nothing to prevent her inviting Beth down to Wildacres for a visit. Of course, she could not ask her to come to a place subject to midnight disturbances.

So to-day many loose ends had been straightened out, and the girls were busy, indeed, attending to details.

"We have lacked that one particular joy," explained Patsy, preparing to run off to the post-office to mail the invitation to Beth, "we needed company. No place like this is ever complete without guests, and now I have asked Beth and the nice little Miss Abbie. Won't you love to have some someone intelligent to talk to, Aunt Mattie?" she asked. Bee's sunbonnet was on her head, Rolly's egg basket on her arm and Mab's pocketbook in her hand. Otherwise Patsy hadn't borrowed anything to speak of, and she was all ready for her dash to the country store where letters could be mailed.

"Everything livens up in the middle of August," remarked Mab. "The boarding places must be overflowing, judging from all the strangers we see in town, and I suppose it will be like this until after Labor Day."

"After Labor Day," repeated her sister, "then how things will die! Like falling in a big hole and pulling the hole in after you. I should hate to live around here when the summer folks leave."

Imbued with the housekeeping spirit which Mrs. Sherman and Rolly were now overworking

in their efforts to fix up for the company, Bee organized a supplementary corps of workers to aid the cleaning up.

"And especially the airing," she whispered, lest Mrs. Sherman take offence at the implication. "You know, girls," she explained, "this place is lovely but just a wee bit musty, and if Beth comes (we take it for granted she will), we should have nothing but freshness and floral hints to greet her."

"Right-o!" agreed Patsy, back from her mission with a basket full of small stuff and hands full of mail. "I'll take the parlor——"

"Oh, I just knew, Pat, you would want the most *interesting* room," Nell pretended to complain. "Do you realize we haven't half looked over all the queer 'what-nots,' old mottoes, and other things in that big parlor? Bee, this is your brigade, can't we all join hands on the parlor?" begged Nell.

"Oh, girls!" exclaimed Bee. "This will be a good chance to hunt that lost paper Mrs. Sherman hopes to find—we haven't done a thing about that, yet."

"I have—I have been searching through everythink I came across," calmly announced Patsy. "I'm afraid there is no such paper to be found,

at the same time let us keep on looking for it."

"Let me win the prize this time—if you see the paper sticking out give me the cue," pleaded Nell prettily.

"All right," said Pat. "I'll do that much for you."

"You organize the squads, Pat," said Bee.

"Fine idea," assented the leader, "but see to it you don't all sit down to look at the album. I realize what a fascination that big red plush album is sure to be; still, I must insist you all keep moving. We have a croquet set this afternoon, you know, and, Nellie, we hope to entertain your pleasant little girl friends right sociably. I smell Mrs. Sherman's cookies 'way out here.'"

"And I've tasted them, for Rolly fetched around samples," retorted Nellie. She was very sweet-looking in her new calico frock—each of the Wayfarers had invested in a "callicker," ordered by mail from Boston where the fad of revived prints had just taken hold. Nellie's was lavender and white in the most old-fashioned floral design, so tiny a flower as to be a mere sprig, Mab's was darker, a grayish ground with a pink leaf speckled on it, and Patsy had a real "Dolly Varden," all flowers so closely crowded

as to hide the background they must have been stamped upon.

The calico fad was only one of the novelties the girls had taken so aptly to since their arrival at Wildacres, another, that probably should take precedence in this meagre report, being that of colored parasols. Such parasols! The Wayfarers almost lost their identity under the shadows of these pretty sunshades, for the usual smart city or seashore effect was entirely submerged in the quaintness of the old town requirements.

It was in gingham, however, that they dressed for the house cleaning tournament, and as it was Mabel's turn to carry fresh berries over to Widow Deane, a protege of Rolly's, she was excused from the first round.

The long French windows in the big room were not opened without an effort—that of Bee and Nell combined being required; but with real daylight then streaming in the "retired sanctuary," our girls actually disobeyed rules and promptly fell to inspecting things about them.

Nell's attention became fixed on the "whatnot." Here she found meaningless little shells, tiny bisque images, china candlesticks and even a pair of brass candle-snuffers. She inspected the lot with the eyes of youth full of sympathy for age,

yet how juvenile the whole collection appeared!

"I am sure," she commented, "these little things were gathered by some children—I mean the shells and china mugs of pebbles. Maybe they belonged to the children in that picture?"

"Wouldn't wonder a bit," flung back Patsy with a dangerous flip of a rather long muslin duster. "But I say, Nell, keep moving, as the policemen say. You know all about those cookies and croquet."

Nell took the cue and flourished her own duster, but kept an eager eye on the slave-driver Patsy, until the latter ventured to stop in the course of her own work.

"Now *you* are not moving," charged Nell. "You have seen that pretty picture before, Pat," she reminded the other.

"But I didn't have a chance, really, to notice how cute it was. Just look at those two dear children! They are not old-fashioned, see their dresses," she prompted.

"No, that isn't an old picture," agreed Bee. "It was just taken in an old-fashioned photographer's. Isn't it cunning?" She, too, paused beside the spell-bound Patsy.

"Such lovely eyes," went on the latter, "and both brother and sister so much alike——"

"Girls!" she cried. "Come here! Quick!"

"Pat Carroll!" called out Nell. "No fair stalling, now! You know they are my friends who are calling this afternoon."

"All right, dear, I'll hurry along," Patsy promised. "But just let me dust this one picture very thoroughly. It's the prettiest in the room, if it is in an old-fashioned gilt frame." She took the cleanest end of her duster for the glass and rubbed the surface with a light, willing hand. Then she went all around the gold frame until not a speck of dust was left hidden in the big, gold leaves.

"Let me have the other cloth for the back?" she asked Bee. "I am going to make a good job of this while I'm at it."

Bee tossed the darker cloth across the room into Patsy's hands, and very carefully the worker swung the picture on its rusty wire. But she did not, at once, proceed with the dusting. Her eyes were, instead, fastened on a carefully written label that was pasted on the back of the portrait.

"Girls!" she cried. "Come here, quick!"

"What is it?" asked Bee, "and why the 'quick'?"

"Just read—this! It says—will you believe me if I read it? Look!" she was really excited. "Just see for yourselves!"

Bee and Nell were on either side of the discoverer now, and all three read in unison:

"Torry, age five years; Beth, age three and one-half years. Christmas, 1906."

"Torry and Beth!" all three exclaimed again. Then they faced the front of the picture.

"Sure as you live!" gasped Nell. "It's *them!*" She could hardly have been expected to say "they."

"Just see their eyes! However did we miss recognizing their expression? See those dark eyes look at us!" demanded the excited Patsy.

"That is surely a picture of our friends," agreed Bee, who was scarcely less excited than Patsy, over the discovery. "But how have we done all this without once suspecting? This must be their old homestead, of course."

"It is very easy to understand that part," explained Patsy, "for I lost the card first thing. That probably had the name 'Wildacres' on it. You know I never had a chance to glance at it for it was handed me as we left the train. Then, since that time, all business has been taboo on account of Beth's nervous condition. I am sure we could count the words we have ever spoken to Torry——"

"Perhaps you can, dear," interrupted Bee, "but

I can't say I have kept such precious account."

The playful thrust brought a new streak of color into Patsy's cheeks, but she was not to be diverted.

"Can you imagine it? Yes, suppose we are mistaken? This might be the home of some other relative——"

"Not likely," contradicted Bee.

"Mrs. Sherman should know," suggested Patsy. "Come along!" and she led the duster brigade on a flying squadron tour out into the cookie-scented kitchen.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEEPENING MYSTERY

"AND do you mean to tell me you know Brandons?" gasped Mrs. Sherman, wiping her hands on a gray roller-towel. "Of course, that's Beth's and Torry's picture in the parlor."

"Oh, glorious!" shouted Patsy. "Where is Aunt Martha?"

"Right here, child. But what is all the new excitement about?" asked the little auntie.

They told her. She sat right down on the wash-basin bench, in her surprise. "Do you mean to tell me this is the *real* old homestead?" she exclaimed.

"The real, only genuine, and original!" chirped Patsy. Nell and Bee were tasting goodies surreptitiously. Patsy was doing a Greek dance with her duster, until Aunt Martha interfered. "Isn't it too extraordinary?" exclaimed Patsy.

"And you have just invited them down, or up, which is it?" asked Aunt Martha.

"We have just invited her *up;* that's it," answered Patsy. "You know, Auntie, we didn't ask the boy."

"Oh, yes, I know. But wasn't it simply remarkable that not a single clue was dropped by any of us or by them? And to think we got here after all!"

"*You* got us here," her niece reminded her. "It was you who discovered Rolly, you must remember." That youth was "hollering" at his enemy Jed that very moment, all because said Jed insisted on calling Miss Patsy, "Miss Shamrock!" But Rolly was apt to win out even with a big, green fence intervening.

"Yes, I do recall that," admitted Aunt Martha, referring to Patsy's remark, "but I am still somewhat confused. How did you manage to take this place, Mrs. Sherman? You wanted the other homestead, I understood."

"Yes, that was Toptowers. I used to live there, and I wanted to get that for you, but it was gone when I wrote the agent. Of course, I knew I could get this—I explained it all to Miss Patsy," she broke off in some confusion.

"And it's all just perfectly peachy," declared

Patsy. "Shall I wire Beth? No, of course not," she answered herself. "They will know all about it when they get my letter, and we are sure they will come, now!"

"They?" mimicked Bee, from the pantry.

"Yes, *they,*" repeated Patsy boldly, "for I am sure if Torry is at the cottage he will come when he hears where we are. Of course, he can stop at the hotel," she smiled at Aunt Martha.

"Oh, mercy me!" sang out Nell. "Here come the girls to play croquet. Take this apron," and she hit Patsy in the eye with a bundle of blue gingham.

"Back to the parlor for us," ordered Bee, having satisfied her afternoon sweet tooth. "We must invite the girls in if it rains, and methinks I hear thunder. I'll dust the chairs, Pat, if you will rub off the piano. Sorry it's so large. I think I would as soon attempt to dust an apartment house from the outside."

"But it can be done," asserted Patsy, "if nothing else in the way of picture-surprises, happens. Just look at those two innocents making eyes at us from their frame! Don't you tingle all over when you anticipate of the glorious surprise they will have?"

"And Pat, have you thought of the Drake

girls? No wonder you were thinking or dreaming of them, which was it?" asked her companion.

"Both. And isn't it too delicious to have conquered them thusly? Not even to have known we were doing it!" and Patsy doubled up to enjoy a real laugh. "I hardly know what move to make next; there seems to be so much involved in our innocent discovery. And those two baby faces in that frame knew it all the time! After all, how weak we mortals be! Ain't it?" Patsy was having a good time with English as well as with her duster.

It is not important to relate that the girls who called on Nell and Mab were actually forced to come inside out of a shower, except that the shower was the first of a series that ran clear through the night. The night storm has an important bearing on the subsequent events, however.

It rained and it rained, and it blew and it blew! Bijah vainly tried to make doors and shutters fast, but they banged and slammed until Wildacres, as a lodge, seemed threatened. So dreadful was the storm that everyone gathered in the long dining-room, and gladly listened to Bijah's stories intending to banish their terror; but, every

time he was interrupted by a shutter, or some "rude" noise, Nell and Mab gave in to another quake of fear. Although to-night Nell seemed more nervous.

The old clock was striking eleven when the wind finally died down, as it so often does around midnight. Just whether storms can tell time or not is uncertain, but they do seem to make rather good guesses, and this nor'easter was not less intelligent than others of his kind.

"Stoppin'," said Bijah.

"It surely is," agreed Mrs. Sherman. Rolly was sound asleep on the hair-cloth sofa, with his face in the buttons and his feet on the walnut roses. He breathed with a slight gulp on the intake, and Patsy remarked it was something about Jed that caused the break in his nocturne. Rolly didn't really snore, but he slept soundly and didn't care who knew it.

Things had quieted down, and Aunt Martha wisely suggested bed, which plan was promptly agreed to, for all hands had experienced rather an exciting day.

"I can hardly wait, now," yawned Mab, the first to fully recover from the storm's influence. Perhaps the big dose of fear served to throw itself off. Certainly she was now quite ready to

talk about the great discovery of the originals of the picture, all over again.

But the others objected.

"It is time for sleepy heads to hug pillows," insisted Patsy. "Why, Mrs. Sherman," she interrupted, "you need not have come up to see about the windows here," as the housekeeper glided down the hall. "We would have attended to them."

"I just wanted to——" she paused, until she reached Patsy's side. "I wanted to peek in and see if everything is all right in the wing," she whispered.

"Oh, yes," assented Patsy, "but I'm sure everything is. Things are—very quiet—and everything," she finished significantly.

In the sleeping rooms there was a general raising of windows, and a general chorus of delight at the sight of the wonderful sky after the great, noisy storm.

"Just see the moon!" begged Nell.

"And see the stars!" called back Bee.

"And smell the roses!" insisted Patsy.

"It will be a perfect night for sleep," prompted Aunt Martha, with the tinge of maturity discounting youth.

They had been asleep, all of them, when some-

thing banged! Even in their drowsy state each seemed immediately to know that the noise came from the wing!

Patsy never spoke until she jumped up and switched on the lights.

"Now, I'm going to get that, whatever it is!" she declared. "Coming, Bee?"

"Certainly!" answered the girl who was also hurrying into robe and slippers.

"Don't let the others prevent us now," warned Patsy. She had her flashlight in hand, and anticipated the step that was at her door. It was Mrs. Sherman's.

"You really can't go in there," begged the startled woman. Her face was white with real fright, and she threw entreaty into her voice. The others of the household were raising various rows, but Bee and Patsy had determined not to listen to any objections.

"Why shouldn't we go, Mrs. Sherman?" asked Patsy, pushing her way through the hall. The banging continued at intervals.

"I shut all those windows tight," declared the trembling woman, "and I am sure you will be shocked—by something!"

"We are shocked now," retorted Patsy, "and whatever that is we have simply *got* to run it

down! You know very well it can't be anything supernatural!" Her words were brave and sounded heroic, but Patsy was quaking, nevertheless.

Bee allowed Patsy to lead, and Mrs. Sherman followed closely. Entreaties from the others fell upon deaf ears, for the two leaders were determined to trace the noise.

"Here's the key," said Mrs. Sherman. "But I had best open the door," she offered as they reached it.

"Nothing of the sort," objected Patsy, fascinated now by the terror of it all. "Please let me have the key."

She turned it once, but the lock did not spring back. Bee could be heard to breath, they had suddenly fallen into such an ominous silence.

The next moment the lock did turn, and the door swung open.

"Oh!" cried Bee, as a great gust of wind swept her face.

"It's nothing but an open window—two of them," announced Patsy, her flashlight searching out the source of the sudden draft.

"I—shut—them tight, an hour ago!" declared Mrs. Sherman, her eyes on the open blackness.

Patsy reached the light button and flooded the room with a welcome glow. Then they stood waiting.

"Booh!" exclaimed Patsy. "Who's here!" and she tramped in boldly, her voice echoing through the long, empty chamber.

The others followed her cautiously, Bee imitated the tramping, giving a little tap-tap-tap, to vouch for her courage. Mrs. Sherman was at a window.

"I'll shut them again," she offered very deliberately.

"Have they no locks?" questioned Patsy.

"No, there are never locks on the second floor of country windows," explained the woman. "Not that a lock would matter in this case——"

"Shut 'em tight," insisted Patsy, giving one a push with her own hand. It flew up rather viciously, and she stepped back with a sudden jerk.

"Wants to bite, doesn't it?" she kept up the defiance. But it must be admitted even Patsy was glad when the closet had been searched, and the faded portieres well shaken without serious results.

"Come along, now do, please, young ladies," begged Mrs. Sherman. "One would hardly think

the draft could be so strong as it was when we came up to the windows."

"But it couldn't possibly open them," insisted Patsy.

"Oh, no, dear, it couldn't do that. What opens those windows——" and her murmur was lost in subdued exclamation and little meaningless gulps.

They left the room and locked the door, more mystified than ever.

"Just now, too," complained Bee, "when we had everything arranged for Beth."

"Perhaps it won't happen again for weeks," said Mrs. Sherman. "There just seems to be streaks of it."

"The only thing to do now," suggested Patsy, "is to forget it. Try to laugh it off. Girls," to Mab's and Nell's heads just sticking out of their doors, "it's all right; nothing but windows."

"Windows!" repeated Nell. "There isn't any wind?"

"Go to yours and try it," suggested Bee; and the experiment confirmed the insinuation, for as Mab did step to her own casement the light draperies blew out in her blinking eyes.

"It is getting windy again," she admitted, and once more, after a general exchange of opinions, they all settled down to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN THE COMPANY CAME

TWO days of perplexity followed the second nocturnal outbreak in the wing room. The girls checked up everything about the place that might be used as a ladder or lift, to reach the windows in the round room; they even suspected the one old faithful horse-chestnut tree, that barely ventured to brush the window panes with its youngest and softest branches, but the clue to the way the windows were reached, and opened, was not discovered in any of the various lines investigated.

Mystified, but sure there was a clue, the Wayfarers continued with their plans to receive the company, for, quickly as their letter reached the Cape Cod cottage, bringing the surprising information of their habitation in Wildacres, a night letter, or long telegram, was sent by Torry and Beth jointly. They promised to come out quickly

as such arrangements could be made. The Brandons' delight at the big surprise was unmistakable, for line after line of the telegram fairly shouted their joy in terms of strongest enthusiasm.

On this morning an early caller was announced. He politely asked to see "the tenant in charge," and at the outset stated he was from the real estate office.

"Something like," declared Patsy. "He doesn't break in upon us as did the ugly old clock-winder," and at Aunt Martha's request the niece accompanied her to the sitting room, there to interview the caller.

"Sorry to disturb you so early," began the man, springing up from his chair, "but this matter is rather urgent. You see, we have hade great difficulty with tenants on this place," he went on frankly, while Patsy and her aunt seated themselves. "People wouldn't stay," he smiled broadly, "and consequently we never could get a good word from a tenant to encourage a buyer. And we have got to sell." He used a lot of emphasis on the word "got" and rubbed his hands to further strengthen the argument. He was a pleasant-faced man, neither young nor old, neither fat nor thin, and Patsy thought his name

might be "Mr. Moderation." He introduced himself, howver, as Mr. Madden.

"We like the place very much," said Aunt Martha, in reply to his qualified question, "but I can well understand why people run away from it. It is disturbing in some ways, and there are noises."

"Windows," Patsy hurriedly added. "They seem to be opened and closed in some mysterious way, but that's all the harm they do." She laughed lightly and continued. "Of course, we know it is not done by ghosts; we have suspected a boy who seems to enjoy tantalizing the little fellow we have here with us, but none of our suspicions leads to a solution of the mystery. At the same time we are interested in the Brandon heirs——"

"Do you know the Brandons? Is that why you came here?" asked the agent.

"Yes, we know them, but that isn't why we came out here," replied Patsy, who always helped her aunt by assuming a good part of conversational responsibility. "By a very strange coincidence we came out here not knowing this was their grandfather's place."

"Oh, I see," and the man's face brightened. "Then you could not be charged with undue in-

fluence, so to speak. You see we have one line of heirs opposed to selling. They pretend to think the place will become more valuable, whereas everyone knows real estate is at its crest, and due for a drop. *We* always want to sell," he apologized, "that's easy to understand, of course."

"And reasonable," responded Aunt Martha.

"My problem is this," continued the business man, "I have a party very much interested in this place; he is settling his factory here in Massachusetts, has that all arranged, and his family wants an old-fashioned homestead. The price does not bother them at all, and this description suits. Now, his representative, Judge Davis of Boston——"

"Judge Davis of Boston!" exclaimed Patsy.

"Yes; happen to know him?"

"We have met him this summer, and he is an old friend of dad's," explained the newly-surprised girl. "It does seem to me, Aunt Martha, our discoveries are making up for any lost time in the early season."

"Doesn't it?" Aunt Martha was a true Wayfarer and keen for the joy of surprises.

"Then, if I bring Judge Davis out here to look over this place," went on Mr. Madden, "will you say a good word for it?"

"We would sell this dear, old place to the most critical buyer you can present," declared Patsy. "That noise in the wing room is sure to be duly accounted for, and in the meantime it doesn't hurt anyone."

"Spoken like a man!" said Mr. Madden, rubbing his capable hands in glee. "We can sell the place if you talk like that to any customer. This noise business is all tommy-rot! I'll wire Judge Davis at once. As usual, the mill magnate has to settle things immediately."

"A man called here when we first came," said Aunt Martha. "He said he was a principal heir, who might he be?"

"Thad Drake, likely. Sort of gruff and rather —loud-spoken? Goin' around inspectin', maybe?" suggested the agent.

"Yes. Took to winding our clocks, for instance," explained Patsy. "And he is the father of those Drake girls?"

"Ex-actly!" said the man, very emphatically. "They're the objectors, obstacles, you might say. Thank goodness Bell and Millie are busy workin' out Boston way. Their mother is harmless enough, but those two girls!" He strangled some very strong emotion and it was not "love" for the Drake girls. "Then, I'll run along," he

concluded, "and don't be surprised if Judge Davis and his client run out on the afternoon train."

Mr. Madden left the grounds in his smart little runabout, and Patsy with Aunt Martha hurried along to finish such details as, fresh flowers in the rooms, straightening of flying window draperies, etc.; while Nell and Rolly quarreled about the stray leaves that dodged their brooms in the porch-sweeping tournament.

If, perchance, any spook or spooklet was hidden on the premises, or thereabouts, it must be a daring Thing indeed, for a happier set of homemakers could not be found in many miles, than those who so enthusiastically made ready for the coming of Beth and Torry, the babes in the parlor picture.

"Wouldn't it be jolly if they all came in on the same train?" suggested Mab. She had just finished watering the pink geraniums in the long box in the front porch.

"They will, likely," replied Bee. "There is only one afternoon train from Boston, you know."

But one half-hour leeway remained between the changing of hammock cushions, and the coming of the three-thirty train, and in that time each

girl flew off to dress, so as to be ready on the porch when the arrivals should arrive.

Girls can do that—dress in a half hour when they really wish to, and the Wayfarers answered the train's shrieking whistle by reporting promptly on the big porch before the taxi driver honked his own particular, company warning.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Nell needlessly, for they were there!

"And Beth is walking in!" said Aunt Martha.

"Who's the other woman with Miss Abbie?" asked Mab. The arrivals were coming up the path and the Wayfarers were running down.

"That's the nurse, you know, Sis," replied Nell. Torry was leading up in the rear with bags banging on each arm like quotation marks, and Zippy was trying to pull him over with an effort to break free from his own leash. Torry dropped a bag and unsnapped the catch that loosed the frisky little animal.

Followed such greeting and exclamations!

There was so much to say at once! How lovely to see Beth walking! How delightful for Beth to see the girls actually at her beloved Wildacres!

"Almost miraculous!" breathed the delighted

Aunt Abbie who was actually kissing Aunt Martha.

"Leave it to the girls," declaimed Torry in his most courteous greeting. The compliment was accepted with a round of bows, done in different period effects. Patsy jerked a real curts'y while Nell almost genuflected.

Selma, the nurse, was promptly taken in charge by Mrs. Sherman, and Bijah forgot all difference in caste by almost weeping with joy over Beth and Torry.

"Never thought you'd come home again," he kept murmuring. "This is a rare, happy day for old Bijah."

"And for us, also," returned Torry. "I have been expecting and planning to get out here all summer, but Sis has been very ill, you know." He added the last clause in a subdued voice.

"I know; I've heard," repeated Bijah. He claimed Torry's attention as man to man, naturally.

There was a sudden rush from the side porch. It brought with it Rolly and Zippy beautifully mixed.

"I've got a dog! I've got a dog!" exclaimed Rolly, unmindful of company and all. "And I'm going to keep him, Bijah!" he declared. "You

can't make me chase this one, fer he come right up to me and—kissed me!"

Everyone laughed. Rolly was so serious in his defiance of Bijah's relentless rule, and he had no way of knowing that Zippy actually belonged to the family. How wonderful that every detail was working out satisfactory.

Rolly, at last, had found his dog!

"You may keep him, son," agreed the smiling old gardener. "Me and Zippy is right good friends, ain't we, Zip?" and he patted the dog fondly. It was unimportant that part of Zip's joy at the home coming should be strengthened by the freedom following his train captivity.

Rolly looked on, fascinated. A real dog to live with him at Wildacres! Now he would show Jed!

"Zippy was brought up here," explained Beth. "Grandfather taught him all sorts of tricks." Her dark eyes softened at the memory.

They were seated on the porch, and Mrs. Sherman now brought the coolest of lemonades. Torry and Beth recognized her as the neighbor from Toptowers, and her presence added to the delightful reunion.

"But I am only visiting," remarked Mrs. Sherman aside to Beth. "You see we were dis-

appointed. Mr. Toppin forgot us, after all."

"Didn't he leave you the little garden house you always expected?" asked Beth, surprised.

"No," said Mrs. Sherman, but she followed quickly with: "Take your lemonade, dear, while it's cool. We don't need ice, you know. We still have the lovely cool spring. Your own tin cup hangs in the spring-house yet."

"As soon as everyone is rested we will move inside," proposed Patsy. "Isn't it lovely to play hostess to you in your own house?" she said aside to Beth.

"Here comes someone else!" exclaimed the overjoyed Rolly, who, next to dogs, liked company best.

A runabout was gliding up the driveway, and its occupants proved to be Mr. Madden, real estate agent, and Judge Davis of Boston.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ELECTRIFIED GHOST

ANOTHER flurry of excitement attended the new arrivals. Judge Davis was overjoyed to renew his acquaintance with the Wayfarers, delighted to know Beth and Torry, and eager to secure an option on Wildacres for his business friend, the mill magnate, Milton Morgan.

It took but a few minutes to exchange all these details for suitable replies, and not the least interested was Rolly, with his precious friend Zippy.

If a straw may tell of a tornado's approach, then a mere feather may tell of an equally important catastrophe, for it was a feather, one from Rolly's own duck Goldie, that blew down the hall and precipitated the disaster significant.

"I told you to stay outside, Rolly," remon-

strated the boy's mother. "And now, just see——"

But Zippy was after the feather, and the feather flew up, and up, until it went to the very top of the stairs. The dog dashed after it by way of the steps, although the tiny gray speck of down blew straight up, on top of a current of air rushing in from the front door.

Rolly followed the dog, and Patsy, fearing the frisky Zip might break things, followed both.

"It's under the clock," Rolly explained, for Zippy was tearing wildly around the old square, box-framed time piece.

With a victorious yelp Zip seized something, and as he did there was a bang! Then another, and another!

The sound was repeated some place else, not in the clock but—in the wing room!

"Come quickly!" yelled Patsy frantically. "There's the ghost! It's in the clock and works in the wing room!"

She flew to the door of the dreaded room, and had it wide open before all of the surprised audience could reach the second hall. Bee was first to suspect the real secret.

"Pull that wire again!" called Patsy.

Obeying, Bee tugged at the tiny wire Zip had

first yanked loose, and—Whang! Bang! Thud! fell the windows in the wing room!

"I have it! I have it!" shouted Patsy, running back to the clock. "The wires are somehow connected in the window cords and they operate with the clock's action."

"Our ghost!" moaned Nell.

"Our spook!" sighed Mab.

It took but a few moments to make complete investigation of the ingenious device, and just as Patsy had always claimed, though she refrained from using the banality, the affair was all perfectly simple, and absolutely human.

It consisted of a set of adjusted counterbalanced weights lifted and dropped by levers actuated by clock power. These in turn were first touch off by a current made by strong wind blowing over a paddle-shaped lever, which was hidden behind a cornice outside the window!

"Don't you remember, Torry," called up Beth, who was content to remain on the first step of the stairs in the lower hall. "Gran'dad wrote us he was working on a device to open and close his windows without leaving his bed?"

"I remember it perfectly," assented her brother. He was fascinated, however, by the perfection of the simple arrangement. "Gran'-

dad was as pleased as a child when he had electricity installed here," he continued, "and he wrote us about all sorts of plans he had for utilizing it. Who would ever think one of these would have worked its perfection disastrously?"

"But it has not," put in Judge Davis. "If you had sold this place earlier, you could not possibly have received such a price for it as Mr. Morgan offers."

"Perhaps," agreed Torry. "Then everything appears to be working out right."

"Pull out the clock a little, please," Patsy requested. "I see something sticking out, and it may be the rules and regulations."

"A good guess," remarked Torry, who had shoved out the big time-piece. "Here it all is, written out as carefully as only gran'dad could write it," and he with Patsy faced the "Regulations for my self-opening windows."

They paused to read, but Patsy broke out presently with another cry of surprise.

"Look!" she commanded. "Look at this surveyor's map! See that line running out to the notes on the margin!"

"What can this mean?" asked the young man.

"It is only fastened by a tack. Here, let's

take it downstairs, I spy another secret there," she intimated.

The map was flattened out on a table, and all who could crowd around did so, in keen anticipation.

"Doesn't that say that strip is to belong to Mr. and Mrs. Roland Sherman?" asked Patsy sharply.

It does," said Judge Davis, one of the most interested of the group.

"And see, this is a map of Toptowers," went on Patsy, "and here it is, all signed. There's Bijah's name. Bijah!" she called. "Come in here and tell us about this!"

He came—did Bijah.

"Oh, that old map," he explained. "Yes, sure, I signed that and stuck it up there. Used to be in the desk, but I thought it went with the clock, so I tacked it there. Me and the feed man, Tom Snowden, put our names to it. Y'u see, Mr. Toppin and Mr. Larkin was always tinkerin' at sum'thin', and I allers signed whatever they asked. Yes, I signed that," he finished, as Patsy sank down, triumphant.

"Then it's all right; is it, Judge?" she asked. "We don't want to give Mrs. Sherman any false alarms."

"That's as good as any will ever offered for probate, for it has two signatures and is most carefully worded," replied the judge, who was critically inspecting the queer document.

They told Mrs. Sherman! Woman-like she eagerly accepted the good news without question, for, somehow in her heart, she had continued to entertain a hope that the coveted and promised property would eventually come to her and her little son.

"If only my poor husband knew——" she murmured, brushing away a few pardonable tears. "Rolly, come here, dear. You don't seem to understand."

"He got it," replied the boy. "Zippy got Goldie's feather!"

Judge Davis patted the small head that could see life only through the eyes of happy boyhood.

By this time Torry had made a more complete investigation of the mysterious clock works, and Patsy and Bee were running down the details.

"You see," said the young man, "the windows would only close with a west wind——"

"And only when the clock was well wound," interrupted Patsy, "which accounts for the ghost's relapses until Mr. Drake wound the clock. He must have known everything! Isn't it too—

everything!" she blurted out inadequately. The call of Mr. Drake was subsequently explained to everyone.

"A little bit of all right," agreed Torry, smiling. "It does seem as though our surprises crowded themselves a trifle."

"They always do when they get going," declared Patsy. "There's only one joy left. Dad isn't here; but he is coming to-morrow."

Downstairs, Aunt Martha made the same statement to Judge Davis, old college friend of Patsy's beloved dad, and the proposed big fishing trip was then finally assured.

"And we will have one great, grand, glorious celebration to-morrow, when dad comes!" gleefully announced Patsy. But Rolly and Zippy spoiled the dramatic effect, for they were off again on a tangent after a purposely blown feather from the wing of pampered Goldie.

"Dear Old New England——" began Bee.

"Is absolutely all right," interrupted Patsy. There was a significant, respectful pause. And no one there opposed the statement.

THE END

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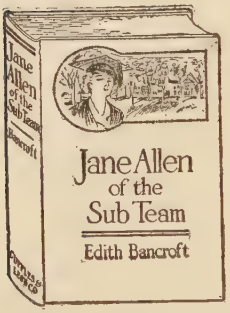

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